



Royal College  
of Nursing

# 2021

REVIEW OF THE YEAR









Welcome	2
Our achievements in 2021	4
Here for you: RCN advice, support and representation in 2021	10
Our 'Big 5' priorities for 2021	14
1. Develop an organising model unique to the RCN	16
2. Ensure the successful delivery of the RCN's Fair Pay for Nursing campaign	20
3. Ensure the successful delivery of our Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC) programme	26
4. Implement and deliver the RCN and RCNi's Education, Learning and Development (ELD) strategy	32
5. Implement and deliver the RCN's independent health and social care strategy	34
RCN representatives	40
RCN forums	44
Thank you	49

# Welcome



As we move into a new year, we continue to see nursing at the forefront of the response to the ongoing pandemic, demonstrating sophisticated levels of technical skill and competence - with practice underpinned by compassion, and understanding for those requiring all types of care in what remains a concerning and relentless environment.

The pandemic has shone a light on the highly complex and safety critical standards of practice that the profession works to, and this has been central to the RCN's campaign for fair pay, terms, and conditions. The RCN continues to campaign for this, and it is quite rightly one hugely important part of the work of the College.

However, the RCN's strength and uniqueness are that we are a sum of more than one part, and in the face of the biggest health and care challenge the world has seen, and the context of other ongoing substantial transformational change, our professional mandate for nursing has never been more important.

Our transformation programme continued to gather momentum, supporting work on our five top priorities. Council has approved ambitious plans relating to continued work to improve the infrastructure and services we provide, including our finance, HR, governance and intranet systems. While reviews of the organisation's culture and governance were launched in the year, led by Bruce Carr QC and KPMG respectively.

The current opportunities for nursing to be fully recognised as a modern and contemporary profession and establish our leadership firmly within this new global era of health and care delivery are significant - nationally and internationally. Indeed, it can be argued that these opportunities do not come round that often and we must grab them. However, there is a risk that the profession is so exhausted and ground down by the daily urgent and emergency challenges that we find ourselves dealing with, that this opportunity potentially slips right through our hands.

We have a huge opportunity to take account of the vast expertise, knowledge, and experience of our members across all sectors. Our membership consists of thousands of clinicians who practise skilfully and safely at the point of care. It also includes members, respected within academia, globally recognised in research, experienced leaders at local,

regional, and national levels; and countless others working in highly regarded roles across both health and social care and who collectively form one of the biggest expert cohorts in the country.

Advances in science, technology and the changing health needs of populations have seen the delivery of care changing dramatically. Nursing staff are already leading and adapting to new models of service delivery, and ensuring provision of high quality, safe and effective care; as well as demonstrating the outcomes of our work in innovation, and practice, as being fundamental to patient safety, outcomes, and experience.

There is a substantial amount of legislative reform currently taking place across all four countries. Policy can sometimes be perceived as dry and even 'boring'; however, it must be recognised that current legislative arguments go right to the heart of practice and professional progression. Topics such as accountability for workforce planning and supply, professional regulation and standards setting, nursing clinical leadership, space for raising concerns, as well as others, are being debated and reviewed.

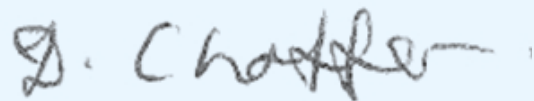
There is an opportunity for this significant legislative reform to ensure that the nursing voice is at the centre of any decision-making, so the configuration and development of the required modern workforce is shaped by those who work within it.

The impact and leadership capability that the nursing profession brings to the healthcare workforce is crucial in helping to lead the transformation agenda and shape the future. This year the 'professional arm' of the RCN has a huge opportunity to consider, address, understand and embed areas for the profession such as - leadership, impact, and scalability of relevant practice – and by doing so, achieve success in many of the areas that are causing both challenge and risk nationally and internationally. Work is to be led by our Professional Nursing Committee, International Committee, Nursing Support Worker Committee, and Student Committee, as well as the Trade Union Committee to ensure that there is a collective leadership approach to all that we do. Please do talk to your local elected members on these committees to hear about this and let them know your own views.

It also feels that this is now the time to be undertaking some structured work on where the profession needs to be in the next five years – ten years – fifteen years - not just to keep up with the huge and rapid pace of change and transformation, but to make sure that we are ahead of it, setting out our own future, advancing and securing it – and by doing so, taking control of our own professional power. Please look out for our work this year and make your own voice heard.



Pat Cullen  
General Secretary & Chief Executive



Dr Denise Chaffer  
President

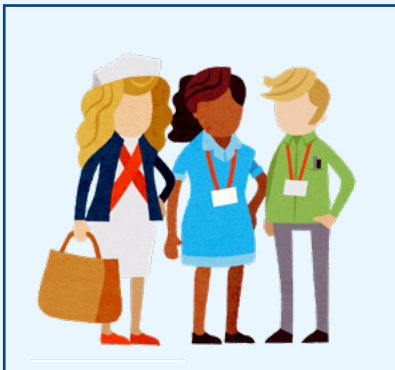
# Our achievements in 2021

**OVERALL MEMBERSHIP OF OVER 465,000**



**405,000**

Registered nurse



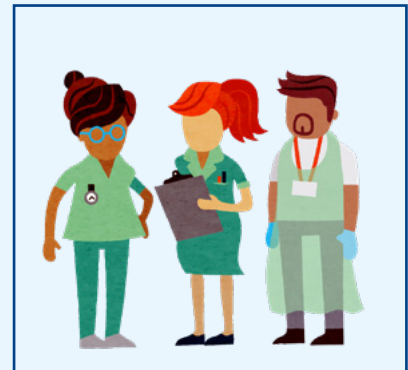
**35,000**

Student



**25,000**

Nursing support worker



**15,000**

Northern  
Ireland

**40,000+**

Scotland

**385,000**

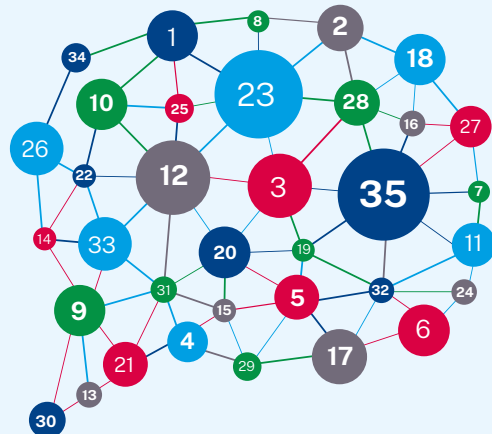
England

**25,000+**

Wales

**MEMBERSHIP BY REGION**

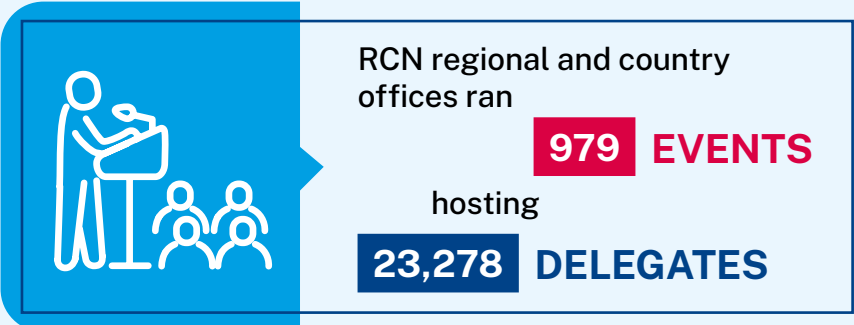
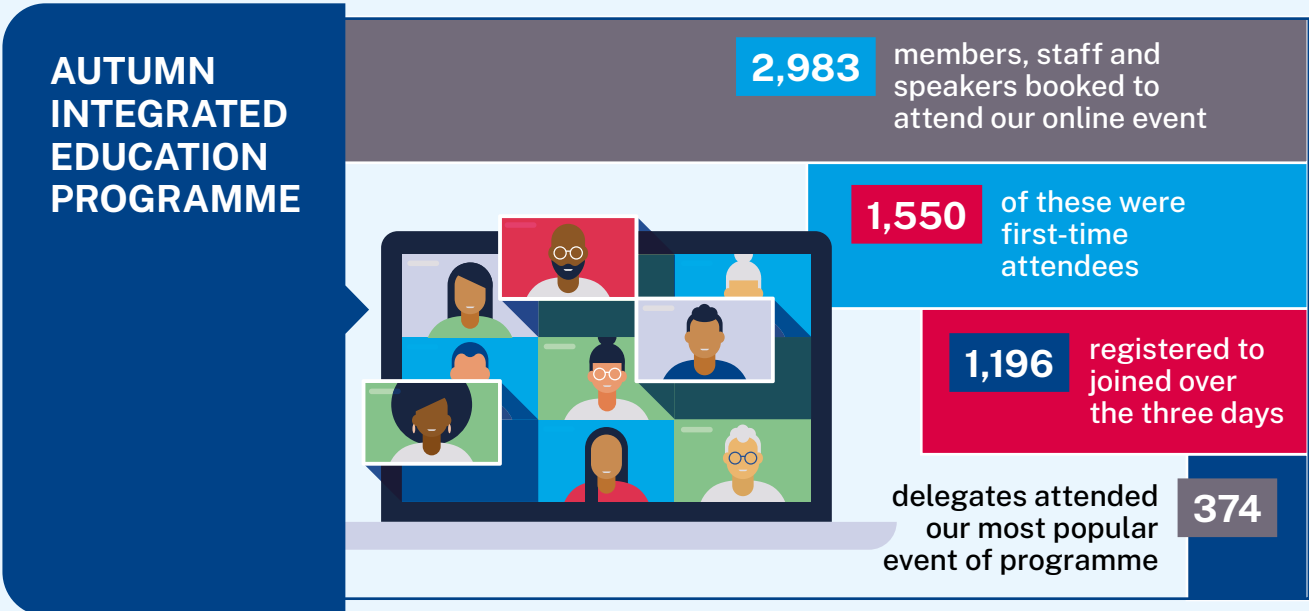
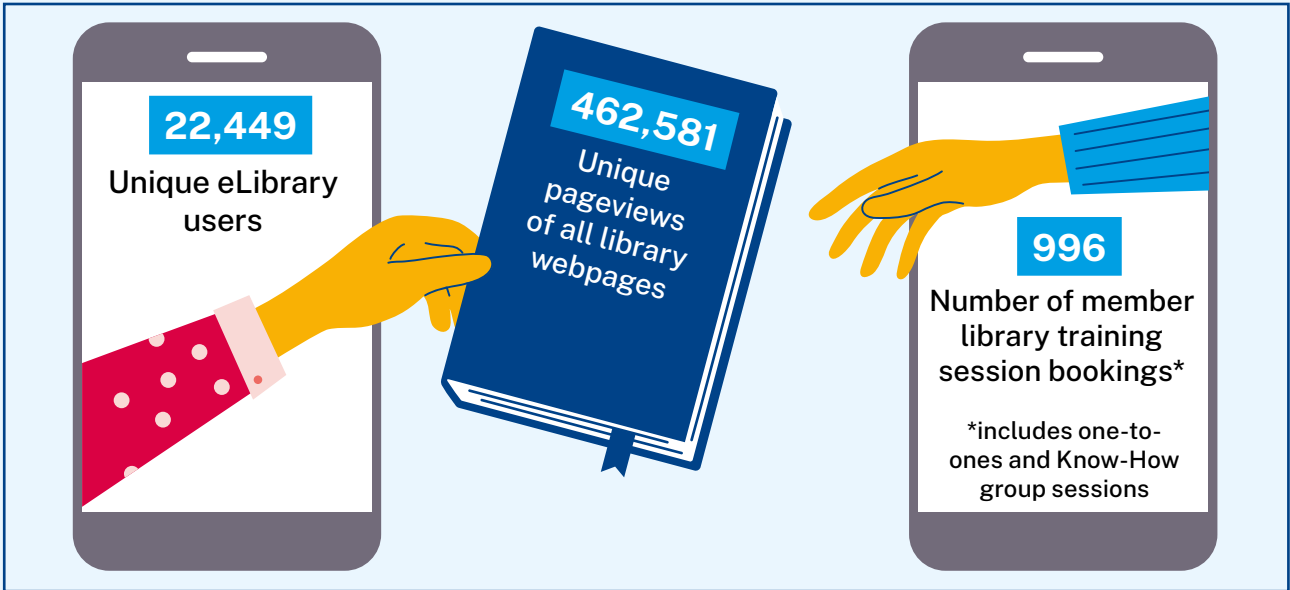
**FORUM MEMBERSHIP**



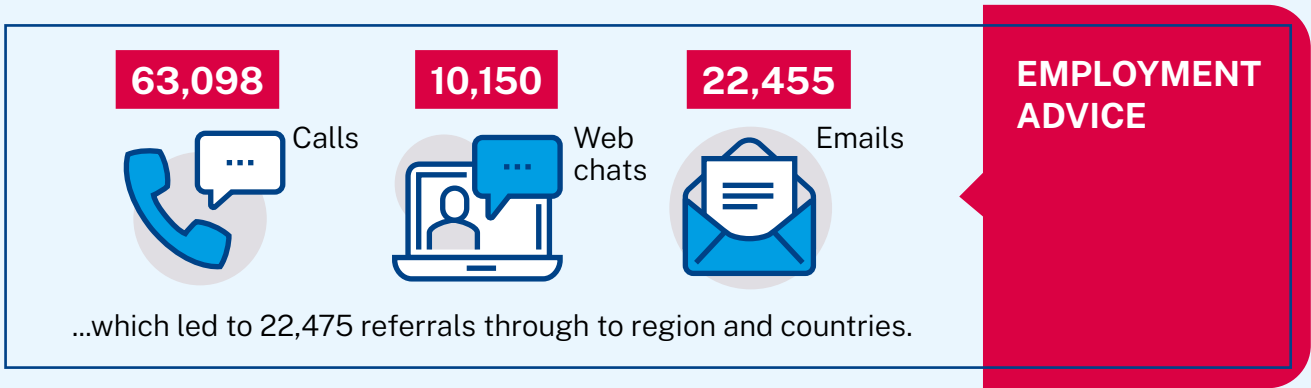
See page 44  
for details  
of our forum  
membership

**35 FORUMS**

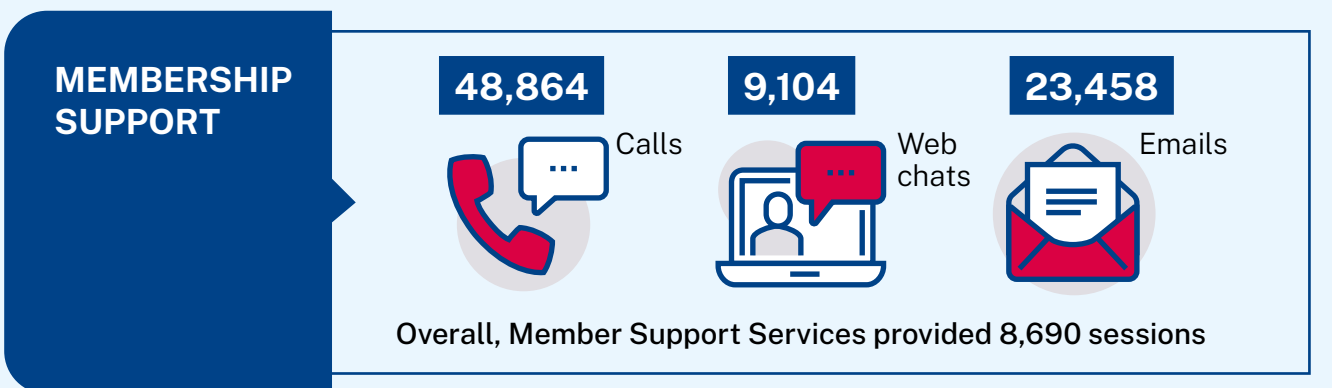
**201,000 MEMBERS**







<b>2020</b>	<b>1,007</b> Stewards	<b>437</b> Learning reps	<b>298</b> Safety reps
<b>2021</b>	<b>975</b> Stewards	<b>469</b> Learning reps	<b>309</b> Safety reps





## LEGAL TEAM

**£4.6m**

Recovered in compensation for members by our in-house legal team

(the figure recovered in respect of personal injury claims by our agent solicitors and RCN Law)

**£316,850**

Recovered for members by our in-house employment legal team

**640** referrals

**60** Employment Tribunal claims submitted



**2,200**

fitness to practice referrals dealt with by the in-house regulatory legal team

(Equates to approximately a third of the NMC's overall caseload.)



### Included

- benefit advice
- DWP appeals
- assisting student with NHS training grant issues
- assisting overseas nurses to transition to new employment.

**180+**

new positions developed...

...ranging from cleaning of uniforms to providing patient consultations over the phone

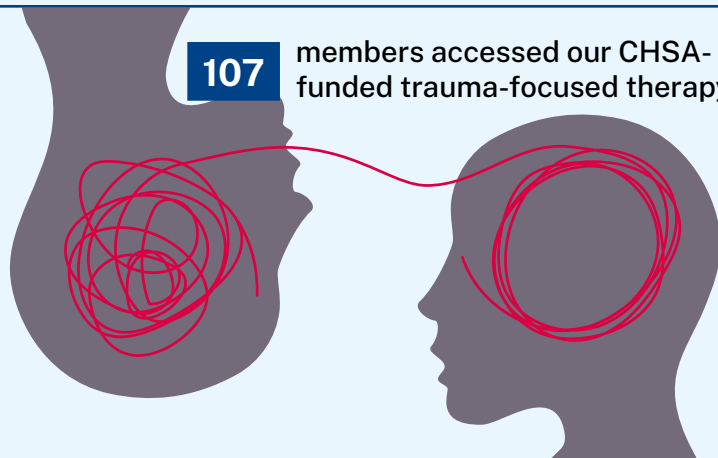
**5,848**

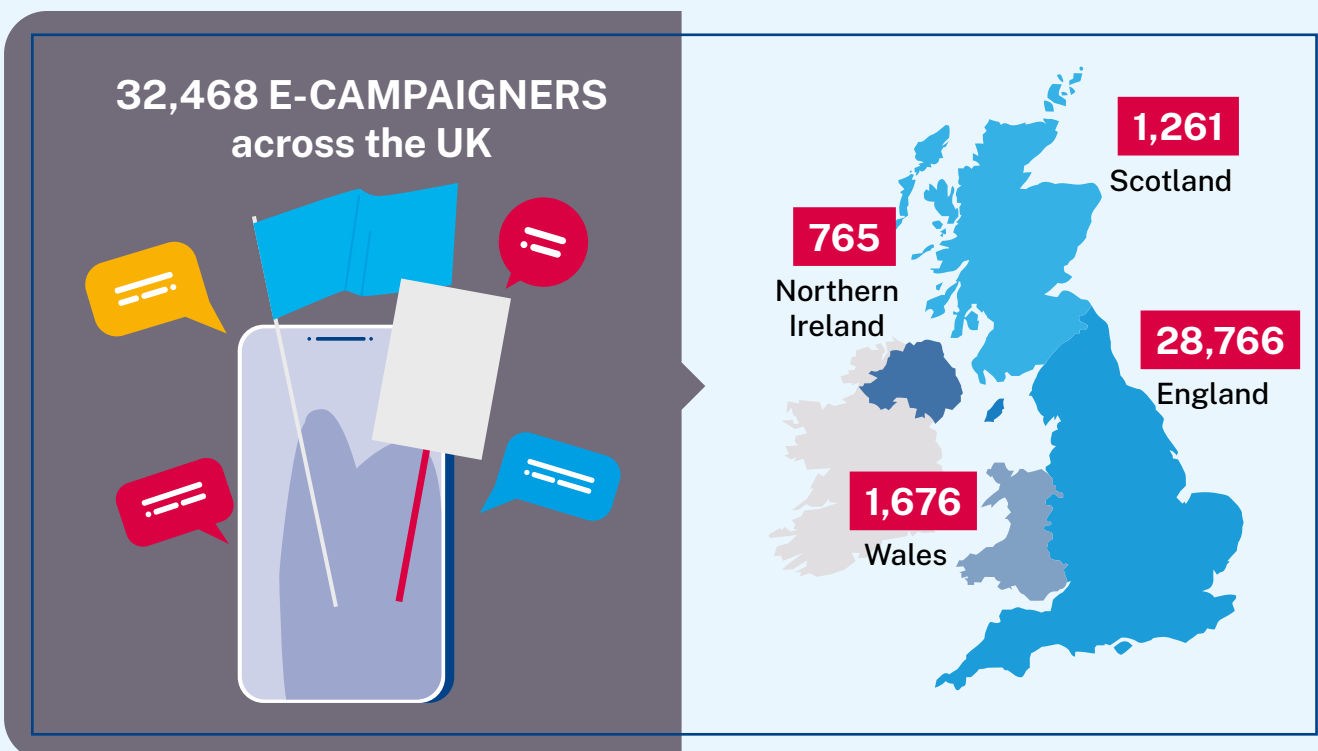
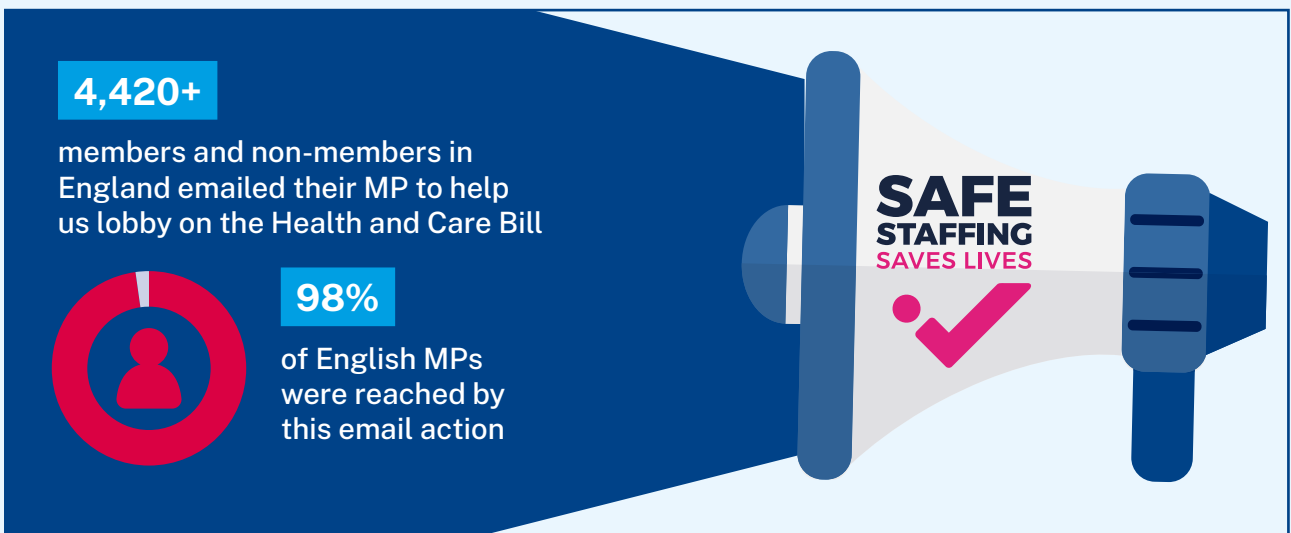
counselling sessions were provided



**107**

members accessed our CHSA-funded trauma-focused therapy





# Timeline of events in 2021

## JANUARY

We submitted evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body (PRB), outlining our pay claim and demanding a 12.5% pay increase for nursing staff.

## FEBRUARY

RCN Scotland launched their Protect the Future of Nursing campaign.

## MARCH

Council approved the creation of an **Independent Health and Social Care Joint Partnership Board** to implement our Transformational Plan.

**RCN Scotland members receive pay offer from Scottish Government.**

**RCN Wales respond to COVID-19 bonus and we respond to the 1% pay award in England.**

We marked the professional and personal impact of the pandemic at our first anniversary **Time to Reflect.** event on 23 March 2021.

## JUNE

We made a **public appeal to the new Health Secretary** to prioritise tackling shortage of nursing staff by paying them fairly.

We launched our **Transformation Week.**

## MAY

We marked **Nurses' Day on 12 May** and held our **Annual General Meeting on 14 May.**

**RCN Scotland members reject their pay offer.**

We launched our **Nursing Workforce Standards.**

## APRIL

We announced our **Big 5 initiatives** for change. See page 18 for details.

**RCN Scotland launch consultative ballot on NHS pay offer.**

## JULY

UK and Welsh governments make **3% pay award.**

Preparations for consultative ballots begin.

## AUGUST

We launched our campaigning app and NHS pay consultations in England and Wales.

## SEPTEMBER

We held our online learning event from 18-20 September.

Vast majority of members in England and Wales vote to say **3% pay award is unacceptable.**

## DECEMBER

Results of our indicative ballots in England and Wales announced and members are urged to stay engaged in the fight for fair pay.

## NOVEMBER

We marked **Nursing Support Workers' Day on 23 November.**

We launched webpages aimed at members who work across **social care and independent health services.**

**Indicative ballot closes in Scotland** and results are announced.

**Ballots launch** in Wales and England; members deliver **UK petition to 10 Downing Street.**

## OCTOBER

**Indicative ballots on NHS pay awards announced** for England, Scotland and Wales.

# Here for you: RCN advice, support and representation in 2021



The pandemic has put immense pressure on our members and the response from the nursing workforce has been remarkable. We continue to respond to our members' needs as they face a wide range of challenges.

## Providing expert advice and support

Throughout 2021, RCN officers across the UK – and within our legal team – supported our members when they needed it most and we provided professional advice and guidance for members, with RCN Direct (RCND) offering telephone and online support.

While we continued to offer online advice and guidance – a reassuring voice was what some members needed. RCND Advice lines handled 7,771 COVID-19 related contacts, giving advice directly to two-thirds of these members and referring a third to their country or regional office for case work or local support.

Our Employment Relations and Legal Services Department provided advice to members on furlough, shielding, maternity, sickness absence, disability discrimination, health and safety and whistleblowing during 2021. The legal team has also been dealing with fitness-to-practice referrals that form part of the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) recovery plan. The litigation processes in both the Employment Tribunal Services and before the NMC remained delayed due the impact of the pandemic and the Legal Team have been managing those delays. RCN Law has also been assisting members with COVID-19-related personal injury claims including bereavement.

Pandemic-related issues were identified from member enquiries to RCND, and resources produced in collaboration with the Nursing Department and our Employment Relations and Legal Services Department. This approach meant we were able to provide timely, accurate and in-depth responses to issues as they arose.

We brought together members from across the UK to mark the professional and personal impact of the pandemic at our **Time to Reflect** event on 23 March.

As well as giving direct advice, we also supported members' wellbeing. Our counselling services provided 5,848 sessions and 107 members accessed our CHSA-funded **trauma-focused therapy**. Financial and welfare assistance was provided to 1,765 members. This included benefit advice, DWP appeals, assisting student with NHS training grant issues and assisting overseas nurses to transition to new employment. Overall, Member Support Services provided 8,690 sessions in 2021.



## New resources for members

A significant number of COVID-19-related online resources have been created, broadly divided into three categories:

**Workplace guidance** – This included a series of frequently updated FAQs for members, looking at everything from redeployment to taking time off.

**Clinical advice** – Clinical guidance centred on the management of COVID-19 and associated issues including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccination.

**Mental health and wellbeing** – Our health and wellbeing resources signpost to guidance and support and gives advice on employers' responsibilities. In December 2021, we produced a PPE risk assessment toolkit for members working in any setting.

In total, the COVID-19 resource pages were viewed over 600,000 times in 2021. The most downloaded or viewed resources were the main **COVID-19 FAQ page** with 13.8% of the total website views and both our **clinical** and **advice guide** on vaccination had almost 160,000 views combined. The activity of these pages peaked from January to March 2021 and then again in December – reflecting the most intense periods in the working lives of members.

## Supporting our workplace representatives (RCN reps)

Our presence in workplaces increased in 2021. One of our greatest achievements was the recruitment and accreditation of hundreds of new reps. Between September 2020 and August 2021, a total of 397 commenced the Foundation module and many progressed to the learning rep, safety rep, or steward development modules.

Throughout the pandemic, we provided reps with the resources they needed to support members working in increasingly challenging conditions. Having adapted very quickly to the challenges presented by the pandemic, our reps worked tirelessly to ensure a safe environment for both staff and patients. Reps provided feedback and intelligence from their workplaces and worked with staff and member groups to influence during this period of change.

## Lobbying government and employers

We developed more than 180 new positions on matters ranging from laundering uniforms to providing patient consultations over the phone. We lobbied governments on many of these positions.

### PPE and improved ventilation

Our members expressed concerns about the grade of PPE they were provided with in their workplaces. **We demanded** all nursing staff, regardless of employer, be given the higher grade of masks (FFP2/3).

In February, we **led a coalition of experts** to demand that Prime Minister Boris Johnson must intervene to help prevent further loss of life by acting on evidence around the need for better ventilation and higher-grade PPE. A month later, a **report we commissioned** showed the government's COVID-19 infection control guidelines, were "flawed and need replacing".



Research published in June added weight to our calls for increased levels of protection for health care workers, as we continued to **champion the need for simplified infection prevention and control guidance**, in line with that used in the US and Europe. Subsequently, UK guidance updated in June emphasised the need for local risk assessment and use of the hierarchy of controls to determine the type of PPE required, in particular respiratory masks.

### **Vaccinations**

We are immensely proud of how the nursing workforce successfully delivered the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. We provided information about how and when nursing staff themselves are vaccinated and we have been clear that mandating compulsory vaccines for health care staff is the wrong approach. However, we do believe all health and social care staff should have the COVID-19 vaccination to help protect themselves and their patients. When, in November, the government announced that patient-facing NHS staff in England would be expected to have their COVID-19 vaccinations by spring 2022, we said the government and employers **must continue to engage with those who have chosen not to have the vaccine**.

## Safe staffing and unsustainable pressures

In May, we launched our *Nursing Workforce Standards*. Described by the RCN Professional Nursing Committee (PNC) Chair Rachel Hollis as a ‘powerful tool for change’, this detailed, comprehensive set of standards sets out – for the first time – what must happen in workplaces to ensure the delivery of safe and effective patient care.

The pandemic has intensified existing pressures on staffing and resources in all health and care settings. However, pressures on health and care services are not limited to COVID-19 or the increased demands caused by winter infections. Our new **Unsustainable Pressures** resources are designed to support RCN members both in delivering safe and effective care and with the difficult decisions they make every day.

Across the UK, members lobbied politicians directly on law and staffing, including roundtable debates with Parliamentarians, lobbying to ensure commitment to legislation is delivered within the current Northern Ireland Assembly mandate, a campaign and petition launch calling on the Welsh Government for an extension to current safe staffing law and calling for the Scottish Government to implement the safe staffing law passed in 2019.

In England, the Health and Care Bill was introduced to Parliament in July, providing an influencing opportunity for our members to seek to strengthen the legislation in key areas. This included accountability for supply and provision of staffing for safe and effective care. An email campaign action reached over 98% of English MPs.

Our work to tackle the impact and causes of staffing shortages continues as well as focusing on long COVID and the lasting impact of the pandemic.

To celebrate the significant contribution of our members we have produced online FAQs alongside several blogs, podcasts and our Library and Archive Service hosted an event as part of the *Nursing During the Pandemic* series.

We’d like to take this opportunity to thank all our members who have given so much in these difficult and challenging times. At the end of 2021, the pandemic had reached another intense period, but we were firmly at the side of members, continuing to support them both professionally and personally.



## Our 'Big 5' priorities for 2021

In April, we announced our Big 5 initiatives for change. These initiatives are key pieces of work which will enable us to achieve our vision for the months ahead.

### 1 Develop a unique organising model

'Organising' refers to a strategic approach to making sustainable, member-led positive change happen; where our members identify the issues they face, and then collectively work together to bring about solutions on their own terms. Our organising programme is developing a self-organised and empowered membership, through skills development and RCN campaigns, such as Fair Pay for Nursing.

developing a **self-organised** and **empowered** membership

**pay awards** across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

### 2 Deliver our Fair Pay for Nursing campaign

Our UK Pay Programme is delivering the Fair Pay for Nursing (FPFN) activity and member engagement relating to the 2021-2022 NHS pay awards across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This includes supporting the member-led governance processes and decision making as well as the operational activity such as member consultations and ballots.

### 3 Deliver our Staffing for Safe and Effective Care programme

Our Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC) programme is setting standards and delivering tools that will help nursing staff in assessment, issue escalation and planning of safe staffing levels for effective care in their workplace, as well as setting up internal RCN support systems (including teams and processes for reactive mobilisation and campaigning).

setting **standards** and delivering tools that will **help**

planning of **safe staffing** levels for effective care



In 2022 we will continue to focus on these priority areas which will be reviewed for continued strategic relevance and where appropriate, further embedded into business as usual.

will boost  
**training**  
 and  
**development**  
 for the  
 nursing  
 workforce

**4**

**Deliver the RCN and RCNi's Education, Learning and Development (ELD) strategy**

Our ELD strategy is building the foundation to position us as a leading source of education, learning and development, and career development for members, non-members (NHS and independent sector), and commercial organisations and will support the needs of the international nursing community.

A single sign-on portal and e-portfolio is being built during phase one, which will give members, non-members and commercial organisations access to professional leadership, education, personal development, clinical and research opportunities that will boost training and development for the nursing workforce.

**5**

**Deliver the RCN's Independent Health and Social Care (IHSC) strategy**

Approximately 20% of our membership work in independent health and social care. Our IHSC strategy has been developed to recognise this and change our culture and leadership behaviour to fairly and accurately represent and meet the needs of members in that sector. Our objective is to make the RCN more accessible and attractive to new and existing members.

fairly and  
**accurately**  
 represent and  
 meet the  
**needs**  
 of members in  
 that sector

# 1. Develop an organising model unique to the RCN



In 2021, a decision was announced by RCN Council and our Executive Team to add to the way we support our members in their workplace: we decided to embrace an ‘organising’ model.

Organising is a strategic approach to making sustainable, member-led positive change happen; where our members identify the issues they face, and then collectively work together to bring about solutions on their own terms.

For us, it’s an opportunity to empower and support members to take personal action and collectively tackle any, or all, of the many issues that threaten their ability as nursing staff to practise safely and effectively and ensure high quality patient care.

RCN members organising to secure improvements in their workplaces and working lives does not replace the professional and employment advice, support and representation available to them in times of difficulty as a benefit of their RCN membership. An organising approach sets the expectation that if members want to create change (whether that be for fair pay, safe staffing levels, or creating clinical practice changes), they hold the agency for systemic change, so they must collectively get involved.

Even though organising is new to the RCN, it is by no means a new idea. Other trade unions, professional bodies, membership organisations and community groups use an organising approach as a way of responding to and challenging injustices and poor treatment experienced by their membership.

An organising framework can be applied wherever a group of members identify an issue of common concern – for example, persistent staffing shortages that compromise their ability to provide good patient care and potentially put their professional registration at risk – and, additionally, they are motivated to get involved in resolving it. The commitment of those affected to spearheading action to initiate positive change is a cornerstone of the approach.

Organising doesn’t necessitate an RCN workplace representative being in situ, not least because some workplaces do not have an RCN rep, but nor does it exclude reps locally from being involved or supporting members in their actions. In organising, the main role of our reps and our staff is to empower members to bring about successful actions by supporting them to build strong networks in their workplaces, investing in their leadership capabilities, building their confidence and standing in solidarity with them.

## Building the foundations of the UK Organising Programme

At the start of 2021, a task and finish group was established by RCN Council to progress the implementation of our organising model. A Head of Organising and a Programme Manager were recruited to in June to lead and further define and develop the programme.

The first step was to clarify and approve the programme's leadership and governance arrangements. A Programme Board was established which includes elected members from Council, our Trade Union Committee, Professional Nursing Committee, UK Representatives Committees, Nursing Support Workers Committee and Students Committee as well as key members of staff. The agreed purpose of the Programme Board is to lead on designing and embedding the organising model within the RCN.

To support the Programme Board, a Staff Working Group was also set up, to act at an operational level and report directly into the Programme Board. Its purpose is to provide expert staff advice and quality assurance to the Programme Board and to carry out key tasks on its behalf.

When it first met in July, the Programme Board recognised that to develop and deliver an effective organising model, in tune with the realities and challenges of working in nursing, we needed to spend time designing and testing different organising methods and tactics.

The Board decided to take a phased transformational approach to understand when and how organising could be applied to our operational business, as well as identify what resources and recurrent expenditure would be required in the long term to sustain an organising model.

The approach defines four distinct stages of development – Discover, Define, Deliver and Iterate – each with its own activity plans and objectives.

In the final three months of 2021, the UK Organising Programme entered the Discover stage. In this stage, we learned from past organising work within the RCN and outside.



For example we reviewed the activities and lessons from NHS-employed members taking industrial action in Northern Ireland over pay and safe staffing concerns in winter 2019/20, our campaigns to secure fair pay for nursing in Guernsey and Jersey, an organising initiative to secure safer staffing at the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust and the development of a network of active RCN members at New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton, plus examples of organising applied by fellow unions such as Unison and the National Education Union.

In parallel, a staff Programme Team – responsible for delivery of activity – ran a series of workshops with members and staff to scope our organising vision, the opportunities for applying it operationally and the pre-requisites and challenges of embedding it within the organisation. In November we held a further workshop for members and staff to reflect on what an empowered nursing profession would look like. This has laid the foundations for work in 2022 to further explore and refine our organising model.

## Organising skills development

Alongside establishing sound foundations for the organising programme and a sustainable governance structure, the learning and development workstream of the programme delivered two skills development programmes for members and staff between March and September. These were:

- **Organising for Power**, a six-week online global programme with US union organiser and author Jane McAlevey, hosted by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Berlin). Enrolment for our members and staff launched in April, with the programme ending in May. The learning was positively received by participants, with 58% saying they wanted to use their new skills to support the RCN's pay campaign and 60% agreeing that they would recommend it to other RCN members.
- **RCN Skills for Organising**, a six-week online programme for our members and staff, consisting of three workshops, designed and delivered in-house. Delivered between July and September, the workshop content included how to hold structured organising conversations, finding workplace leaders, and charting and mapping.

We have maintained contact with participants from each programme to ensure they feel supported in applying their learning where they may be considering organising actions in their workplace.

## Local organising activities

In addition to the two UK Organising Programme posts established, several England regions recruited campaign organiser posts to help identify and progress local organising opportunities, building on the earlier piloting of organising by the East Midlands region and its creation of a dedicated organiser role.

Since their deployment these campaign organisers have supported distinct and customised organising drives in their regions focusing in some cases on responding to single-issue concerns and in another case on nurturing a network of engaged members in a target employer into a formal RCN workplace committee, providing a permanent infrastructure for any future organising activity.

An organiser supported members the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust to secure significant investment in additional staff posts and fairer shift patterns to protect patient safety and increase staff wellbeing. Nursing staff at the trust were feeling burned out after more than a year of working in the pandemic and they wanted to do something about it.





For more details of Carol's experience, visit:  
[rcn.org.uk/magazines/action/2021/august/helping-staff-who-feel-afraid-when-an-error-occurs](https://rcn.org.uk/magazines/action/2021/august/helping-staff-who-feel-afraid-when-an-error-occurs)

The action began in the Trust's ITUs, with RCN members organising meetings for ITU nursing staff. From there, the main concerns were identified, and a collective letter was sent to the director of nursing. It was signed by no fewer than 236 members of ITU staff.

The letter was the first of a series of actions to demonstrate growing support for change, showing the scale and importance of safe staffing to ensure quality care. When members presented their case in person to the director of nursing, 141 nursing staff attended to support their colleagues who were leading the meeting.

Ultimately, the organising campaign yielded the employer's agreement to consult staff on changing their shift patterns so that they work slightly fewer, slightly longer shifts, a move that has since been implemented alongside investment in more nursing posts.

## Looking ahead

Towards the end of 2021, we recruited *Fair Pay for Nursing* campaign organisers to promote the use of organising tools and techniques by members for the duration of the indicative ballots on industrial action over NHS pay in England, Scotland and Wales.

To maintain the profile and momentum of the organising programme, develop the skills of more members and support more local organising initiatives, the corporate UK Programme Team is planned to expand in early 2022. The team will be joined by two senior organisers, three organisers and administration support. These post holders will be deployed to work with RCN countries and England regions, the Nursing Department and other parts of the College to further pilot organising work and enable us to test our approach.

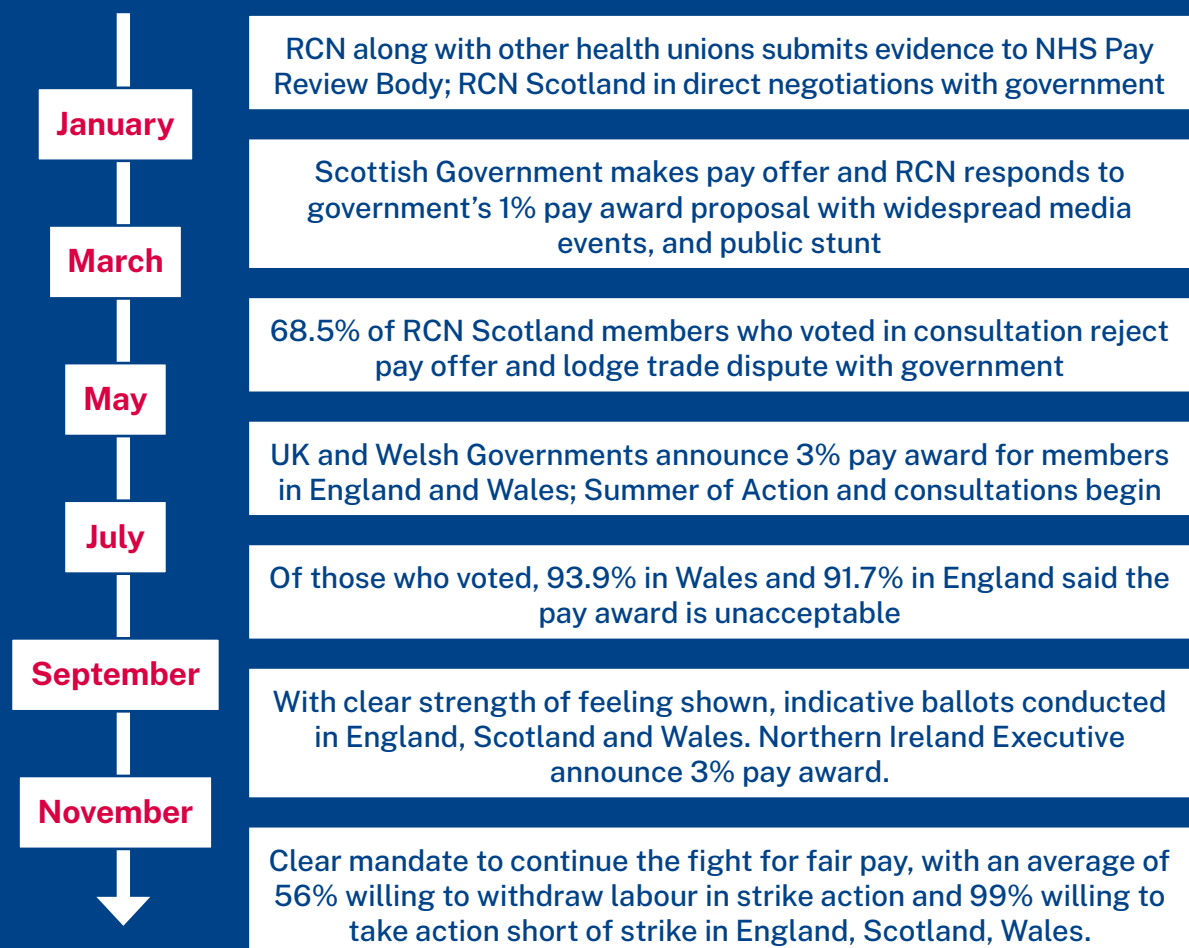
The Executive Team has also agreed to allocate dedicated funding for the evaluation of the UK Organising Programme. This will enable us to learn promptly from the organising pilots we are planning to deliver from Spring 2022 and adapt our approach to ensure the best possible outcomes for our members.

## 2. Ensure the successful delivery of the RCN's *Fair Pay for Nursing* campaign



After launching in late 2020, the *Fair Pay for Nursing* (FPFN) campaign evolved throughout the year. It was led by members and their experiences and empowered many more to influence for the profession.

### Campaign Milestones 2021



Member leadership was ensured by forming member groups in every part of the UK to work with elected members and RCN staff. They set the direction of the campaign and took all key decisions on behalf of the wider membership. As a result, the campaign achieved significant growth in awareness, understanding and engagement across nursing by using new and tested tactics.

## Setting out our case

In the first quarter of the year, we put the campaign on the credible and coherent footing needed to gain influence with members, decision makers and the public.

We submitted formal evidence to the NHS pay review body (NHSPRB), setting out a robust economic case – based on independent external research - for a 12.5% pay rise. As well as putting these arguments in writing, we put members directly in front of the Pay Review Body (PRB) officials as they toured England and Wales. In tandem, RCN Scotland continued direct negotiations with Scottish Government, resulting in a pay offer to members in the spring.

With analysis showing that the Treasury recoups 81% of a large pay award through taxes and growth, we were able to clearly rebut arguments about the government's ability to 'afford' our campaign asks using the media and our member campaign materials.

Central to our campaign was demonstrating that fair pay would have broad, tangible and crucial benefits to patient safety. By listening to members and amplifying their voices, we put the case for pay within the context of recruitment, retention, staffing levels and how vital these are to the quality of care to patients.

Our members were supported to lobby ministers and politicians directly and the RCN ensured a strong campaign presence with members of the Scottish Parliament, UK Parliament, Senedd and NI Executive.

The RCN set out its own case for nursing but co-led the joint union campaign #WithNHSStaff.

## Building awareness and mobilising support

Once the campaign's position was clear, members led the activity right across the UK - online and offline.

New and familiar campaign tools led to higher levels of awareness and understanding of the campaign, achieving a consistent level of support from the public throughout the year.

**FAIR PAY FOR NURSING** 

**Protect nursing. Protect your loved ones.**

**Right now, there are thousands of nursing vacancies in your local NHS and tens of thousands across the UK. Without enough nursing staff, patient care suffers.**

**We are calling for fair pay to:**

- **recruit** staff and fill the thousands of vacancies
- **retain** experienced staff across the NHS
- **recognise** the skill and responsibility of nursing

**Currently, nurses are burnt out, can't afford to live and are struggling to provide the care patients need.**

Nurses welcome us into the world, save and rebuild our lives, maintain our health, and stand beside us in our final moments. Nursing will always be there for you.

**WILL YOU STAND UP FOR NURSING?**

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## FAIR PAY FOR NURSING



**WHEN YOU HEAR  
"The government  
cannot afford it."**

### **YOU CAN CONFIDENTLY SAY:**

**In short, they cannot afford not to.**  
Tens of thousands of nursing jobs are unfilled and more are considering leaving – patient care will suffer.  
Ministers must make the right choice.

**NURSING STAFF NEED A PAY RISE** Let's change the terms of this debate

In March, the UK Government suggested a 1% NHS pay award in its evidence to the NHS PRB and we capitalised on this moment to secure member and public engagement.

In the first 24 hours, we dominated the media, held a national public-facing stunt and attracted record numbers of members to an online event to hear how we will campaign for a better award. Tens of thousands of members of the public also signed a petition to government against the plans in just a few days.

Against a backdrop of awareness and understanding, we focused heavily on mobilising members. Through campaign events, materials and engagement with stakeholders locally and nationally, we broadened our campaigning base in preparation for formal government announcements.

In July, the UK and Welsh Government's announced a 3% pay award for NHS Agenda for Change staff and we moved quickly to launch a Summer of Action across the UK and open consultative ballots to give all affected members a direct say on pay awards.

An interactive map listed events for members to take part in locally such as workplace stalls, silent protests, rallies, and ward-walks. Other opportunities targeted specific groups including RCN representatives (reps), students and ethnic minority members to secure engagement. To demonstrate clear member leadership, we released video messages from Graham Revie, Chair of the Trade Union Committee.

Between March and September, we secured almost 4,000 mentions of the campaign in print and online media, resulting in 970 million opportunities for members to see, read or hear about the campaign. We also secured coverage on every major broadcast channel featuring in almost 1,500 television or radio appearances.

We raised the profile of the campaign through advertising, with hundreds of paid for social media adverts we created 15.8 million opportunities to view and over 145,000 clicks on campaign content.

Over 160,000 signed the petition to the Prime Minister calling for an urgent and significant pay rise for nursing staff. Five RCN members took the petition to Number 10 Downing Street to coincide with the launch of indicative ballots in England and Wales. Those members spoke to media and featured in the 108 pieces of media coverage that day.



We also continued mobilising support for the campaign through our Campaign Supporter programme. Across the UK, we grew our campaigner base by 235%. Of the 36,035 people who are committed to campaigning with the RCN, 46% are members of the public.

To support members to engage their colleagues, members received packs of campaign materials tailored to local contexts and explaining the pay award and balloting processes. After March, 460,000 campaign materials were dispatched to representatives and branch executives.

Video content, articles and printed materials often took an 'explainer' format. These were developed in collaboration with members to make complex issues very accessible, engaging and demonstrating a clear reason for members to engage further. The topics covered how pay awards are decided; how a 3% award is a real terms pay-cut; and what to consider when voting on taking industrial action.

Patient safety concerns remained at the centre of our messaging throughout.

When ballots were live, new approaches secured record turnout for our NHS ballots. Those who had not yet voted were targeted by text messages, emails and social media advertising for the full ballot cycle.

All members were asked to confirm their contact details, leading to thousands of members updating their details.







## Developing activism and shifting perceptions

By stimulating member-led campaigning and growing support for the campaign locally, we reached new groups and gained clear direction for the campaign's future.

Training sessions for members, including in relation to the RCN's first *Industrial Action Handbook* were launched and were key to building capacity within the membership. National and regional teams held regular sessions with local reps and the campaign was a central feature of the two RCN Joint Reps Conferences of the year.

During the ballots cycle we applied organising principles and invested in a new peer-to-peer engagement platform, ThruText. In total 36 accredited reps underwent training to use the platform and together with RCN staff, contacted 48,000 members about the campaign.

To diversify our media voice, members underwent intensive media training, allowing us to cover greater ground in interviews and cement the RCN's position. Our media presence was key to maintaining public support and polling found two thirds supported calls for a significant pay rise for NHS staff.

Campaigning on pay positively impacted the RCN's reputation and brand too. Independent research carried out in July found that four in five of all new joiners had seen the RCN in the media talking about pay and, of them, 70% said it impacted their decision to join. Members who see the RCN campaigning on such issues reported being significantly more likely to promote the RCN to others and renew their membership.

Of those who voted in consultative ballots, 93.9% in Wales and 91.7% in England deemed the pay award unacceptable and 68.5% in Scotland rejected the pay offer made there. The ballot in Northern Ireland is due to open in January 2022.

With these results, members gave a clear directive to pursue indicative ballots, in which a significant proportion of voters said they would consider taking industrial action. This strength of feeling provides a solid foundation upon which to continue campaigning in 2022.

## Innovating with evidence

Campaigning throughout 2021 has given us an understanding into how best to mobilise support and increase activism.

With our own analysis and research partners, we have broad insight to draw on for 2022 and beyond. This includes deepening our understanding about how our members think, feel and behave in relation to the campaign; using new technology to support member-to-member conversations; and analysing voting patterns to build further engagement.

These approaches are now embedded in the evaluation process, and we can ensure that data and evidence is at the heart of our continuing fight for fair pay for nursing.



### 3. Ensure the successful delivery of our *Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC)* programme



Safe staffing is a thread that weaves through everything we do, every position we develop and every statement we make.

We know that tens of thousands of nursing roles were unfilled in the NHS and across social care even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The past two years has only amplified what was already a workforce in crisis.

We have called for governments across the UK to have an honest conversation with the public about how overstretched health and care services are, and to be clear on the true number of nursing staff required to deliver safe care to patients.

As a professional College and trade union we expect a solid foundation for every one of our members to deliver the care needed to provide quality care and keep patients safe. But right now, that foundation feels unstable.

That is why this work is so important. The evidence proves having the right number of nurses with the right skills mix to provide staffing for safe effective care is fundamental to positive patient outcomes and to support a sustainable health care system.

Our work on safe staffing is continually evolving. In April 2021, the Professional Nursing Committee (PNC) having taken over the governance and leadership of our work, held a workshop with staff to identify opportunities and risks and to agree key priorities, aims and objectives. As part of this work, the UK SSEC principles were revised as follows:

#### **Responsibility and accountability**

There is a clear governance framework that details responsibility and accountability for demand-led assessment of health and care workforce, based on population need, reflecting our Nursing Workforce Standards and workforce planning.

#### **Clinical leadership and safety**

The right number of registered nurses and nursing support staff with the right knowledge, skills and experience are in the right place at the right time.



## Health, safety and wellbeing

The nursing workforce is entitled to work in healthy and safe environments. The health and wellbeing of nurses, midwives and nursing support workers is essential to the quality of care they can provide for people and communities, affecting their compassion, professionalism and effectiveness.

Having agreed these principles, updated programme objectives followed.

1. To deliver our overall approach to staffing for safe and effective care work (including implementing the RCN's five principles) through leadership of country campaign groups.
2. To have in place evidence and knowledge that will support the our position.
3. To continue to harness support for our position on staffing for safe and effective care, from members, the public, stakeholders and politicians.
4. To use UK safe staffing as a vehicle for our member engagement strategy.
5. To drive change which enables staffing for safe and effective care in every health and care setting, regardless of provider.
6. Empower and enable members and their colleagues in their workplace to feel psychologically safe to raise staffing level concerns related to quality and safety and deliver key campaign messages on an ongoing basis.

To support the delivery of these objectives, new programme workstreams were set up in (addition to the existing country workstreams) with member voices key to their work.





## New workstreams

**Policy and evidence** – To deliver UK level content to support high-impact policy influencing for all health and care settings.

**Nursing** – To disseminate and embed our *Nursing Workforce Standards*, interpret them for specific settings and evaluate their impact.

**Supporting member activism** – To draw together learning from work undertaken through regional and country leads, focusing on increasing the number of members engaged in activity in support of SSEC strategic aims.

**Communications** – The UK SSEC communications workstream aims to support all output and activity agreed by the Programme Board, on an ongoing basis.

## Key moments in 2021

A focus for UK SSEC in 2021 was to support RCN members to use our *Nursing Workforce Standards* as a vehicle for positive change across all settings and all locations. Activity included:

- staff and member webinars to support education and engagement



- the rep toolkit *Ask. Listen. Act.* was refreshed to align with the *Nursing Workforce Standards* and hard copies of this and the Standards were provided to all UK reps in December 2021
- a series of case studies are being developed to demonstrate the effectiveness of the *Standards* in practice
- RCN regional teams discussed the Standards with professional stakeholders, ministers, MPs, and their devolved governments
- the Nursing Department created opportunities to discuss the *Standards* at conferences and meetings. Individual work also took place to support leaders to implement the standards in their area, for example, with the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- the Mona Grey Lecture at Congress 2021 was dedicated to the *Standards* with PNC leading a four-country panel focused on the Standards and legislation
- dedicated *Nursing Workforce Standards* web pages are in place and regularly updated
- members are reminded about the Standards through regular content in the weekly member email and social content.

## Country updates

### England

In 2021 our *Nursing Workforce Standards* were a significant driver for the work of the England workstream. They were used to support local/regional agitation around issues impacting members. One example was at the Royal Free London Trust, where members were supported to collectively campaign for a change to shift patterns and secured a change for over 2,500 nursing staff at the trust.

More than 4,420 members and non-members emailed their MP to help us lobby on the Health and Care Bill, which sets out a range of reforms to the health and care system in England. 98% of MPs were made aware of our demands for the Bill, which we do not believe goes far enough in addressing the workforce crisis. Our work in this area continues.

In November we produced a report titled *10 Unsustainable Pressures on the Health and Care System in England*. The report identified ten areas that demonstrated unsustainable, untenable conditions within the health and care system across England, all of which are reliant on nursing.

Other work included submissions made to *Getting It Right First Time* (GIRFT) report consultations and reviewing GIRFT data for safe staffing implications and evidence.

### Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland team continued to apply pressure regarding legislation and work is progressing, albeit slowly.

A nurse and midwifery task group was implemented, and an additional 300 nursing student places allocated.

The Delivering Care policy framework is now in place with £20 million provided to raise levels of nurse consultants, band 8as, 7s, 6s as well as band 5s.

Sense Maker was successfully implemented as a tool to hear and utilise the member voice.

## Scotland

The Scotland SSEC team was involved in wide-ranging consultation on the development of a national care service – the proposals cover social care and community health care services. The RCN Scotland team continues to apply pressure on the Scottish government for a timetable to implement the Health and Care (staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 to be agreed. This has been a key message in our media responses and in our political influencing work through meetings with opposition politicians and in the evidence we have presented to the Scottish Parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) have been given notice that failure to enact the legislation will be spotlighted at Congress in Glasgow in June – which marks six years since the then Cabinet Secretary for Health, Nicola Sturgeon, announced the intention to legislate for safe staffing.

## Wales

2021 saw concerted lobbying with the new health minister and government for the extension of legislation and in October was successful in getting legislation extended to cover Paediatric settings.

November saw the launch of a new public campaign based on the concept of The Full Team, which included a film and information on nursing numbers being projected onto public landmarks in Cardiff.

The Welsh team was also able to persuade the Welsh parliamentary Health and Social Care Committee to undertake the first inquiry of the parliamentary term into scrutiny of HEIW (workforce planning).

## Other SSEC activity in 2021

Safe staffing key messages were prioritised and featured as part of *Fair Pay for Nursing* campaign narrative. Several episodes of the PNC's *Nursing Matters* podcast were dedicated to the issue of workforce planning and staffing levels.

The RCN is developing new ways to gather evidence to support and drive SSEC UK work, including Sense Maker; Power BI; surveys; tipping point tool and the RCN's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

It became clear towards the end of 2021 that, contrary to government mantra, the pressures on the health care workforce were unsustainable.

In early December the UK SSEC Board, PNC, and workstreams agreed that whilst the business of supporting and advocating members to deliver safe and effective care continued as usual, this was a critical moment requiring a campaigning approach. To this end a plan of action was developed for the winter months up to March 2022.

Resources to support members, including our *Unsustainable Pressures* web pages were launched and activity focused on refreshing and sharing COVID-19 resources with members.

An expert working group are meeting in early January 2022 to discuss next steps for the RCN's safe staffing work, and the agreed programme of work will be the focus for the year ahead and beyond.





## 4. Implement and deliver the RCN and RCNi's Education, Learning and Development (ELD) strategy



Work has continued during 2021 on progressing the development of a single online portal to help ensure that all RCN education can be easily available to members, subscribers, and non-members.

Our education programme is led via a co-production approach with the Professional Nursing Committee, expert member representatives from across the UK; and RCN and RCNi staff working collaboratively across the two organisations.

The work is divided into a number of phases, with phase one currently addressing the production of the single portal to provide an ease of access for all resources offered nationally from the RCN and RCNi. The existing RCNi e-portfolio is also being further developed to provide a single portfolio for all RCN members.

This remains an ambitious and technically challenging piece of work, aiming to support members to map their lifelong learning to their personal career development, and if relevant to that member, professional revalidation. The portal for education will also support delivery across the regions and countries to help members access quality assured evidence-based resources.

Work has identified, reviewed, and mapped education content across the four countries aligned to the four pillars of professional practice. This has highlighted that there are well over 2,300 pieces of content currently categorised as education and learning resources.

Extensive work has been undertaken to understand what is offered, what might be offered, and categorisation has been mapped to both and any other relevant parameters of RCN education content and products. Archiving of resources is being undertaken as necessary.

The multiple RCN competency frameworks have also been reviewed with the development of a single capability framework. This provides our forums with a standard for development of relevant competencies and addresses development of knowledge and skills in digital preparedness, genomics, and sustainability. Evaluation of the implementation and impact of the framework has commenced.





Market research will support development of the next phase of the education work to help inform any gaps in the current offering to members and subscribers to help strengthen this phase.

Other work to be undertaken going forward is to review and consider any required expansion of our current student offer, particularly considering the provision of knowledge and skills development in political influencing and leadership. This would align to the review of the current leadership offer and expansion of the delivery, providing further opportunities for us.

The ambition continues to deliver real change within the education space for our members, subscribers, and non-members.

By doing so the aim is to have a lasting impact of change by optimising the professional offer and providing us with the ability to tailor its' education delivery in the future.

This also aligns to our goal of ensuring that our members do not just 'keep up' with the huge and rapid pace of change and transformation happening across health and social care sectors both nationally and internationally, but to make sure that as a professional organisation we are supporting all our members to stay ahead of it, influence it and lead it – no matter where they work, or what their role is.

## 5. Implement and deliver the RCN's independent health and social care strategy



The independent health and social care (IHSC) sector is growing across the four countries of the UK and with this growth there is great diversity in the types of services and roles registered nurses and nursing support workers undertake.

Analysis of our database shows that 40% of members work outside of the NHS and 63% of these are employed within the IHSC sector, in services such as care homes, nursing agencies, independent hospitals, hospices, home care, GP nursing, justice health care and social care enterprises. Each of these services make a vital contribution and are integral to the delivery of integrated and accessible health and social care across the UK.

As the voice of nursing, the RCN needs to connect, engage, and represent registered nurses and nursing support workers irrespective of where they work.





## Background

In November 2020 Council approved the high-level IHSC sector Transformational Plan and in March 2021 Council approved the creation of an IHSCS Joint Partnership Board (PB) to implement the Transformational Plan.

The Joint Partnership Board met for the first time in May 2021, and again in July, five workstreams (see table below) were established to progress specific pieces of work, with each workstream having a defined purpose, objectives and deliverables to work towards.

Workstream	Purpose
Care home acuity and dependency staffing tool	To develop an evidence-based acuity/dependency tool to inform workforce planning and staffing for safe and effective care.
Accreditation / recognition scheme	To develop focused training resources, standards and accreditation schemes.
Professional nursing role profiles	To develop an overarching UK-wide professional framework for nursing that includes all settings.
Review and renew approach to collective bargaining	To develop an agreed RCN approach to collective bargaining in the IHSC sector over nursing staff's pay, employment terms and working conditions.
Communications and marketing	To ensure the RCN is seen as the membership organisation of choice for nursing staff across the IHSC sector.

## An innovative approach

Adopting a co-production, co-design approach, the Board includes two Council members, a member from the Professional Nursing Committee (PNC) and the Trade Union Committee (TUC), alongside our staff with the intention of achieving collaboration and a seamless progression of the work. This member/staff partnership is fostered throughout all stages of the work, with expert members sitting on each of the workstreams. This is integral to the successful delivery of outcomes for members and is an approach consistent with the core principles of good governance, as it allows for the member voice to be heard and engenders a culture of openness, transparency, and accountability.

The Joint Partnership Board has met monthly in 2021. A brief synopsis of current and potential work is presented at every PB meeting by each country and Department, and workstream lead, which facilitates greater understanding, future collaboration, avoids potential duplication of effort, and highlights (inter)dependencies.

## Where we've made progress

The RCN Care Home Network was established in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, its remit has expanded to facilitate networking, share good practice, and raise concerns. In December 2021 it has 757 members. Work is underway to bring this network in-house (it is currently a Facebook Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/RCNCareHomeNetwork/>).

In March, we produced a graphic (below), encouraging staff to think about the needs of our IHSCS members when designing a new activity or project.

Three training courses in Northern Ireland specifically focused for members working in the independent sector have been RCN accredited, and work is ongoing across the four countries to see how education, learning and development (ELD) opportunities delivered in one part can be mirrored in others.

- Leading for Care.
- Leading in a Crisis.
- Nurse in Charge.

The creation of a new award specifically for IHSC sector members at the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards, with sponsorship secured

Nursing Support Workers' Day took place on 23 November with record levels of involvement from members working across the IHSC sector.

Director of the RCN in Northern Ireland, Rita Devlin said: "We want to build on the success of last year's celebrations and ensure that the contribution of Nursing Support Workers to health and social care is recognised by employers, politicians, patients and their families.

## DID YOU KNOW...?

### A significant – and growing – number of RCN members work outside of the NHS.

The RCN is here for **all** our members, so when we design a new project or piece of activity, we ask all those involved to consider the following questions. This helps ensure that everything we do connects with members who work in independent health and social care (IHSC).

**So, when designing a new activity or project ask yourself:**

#### Are you being inclusive?

Is the language you use **inclusive** and does it incorporate meaningful reference to members working in IHSC, not just the NHS. What can you do to be inclusive?



#### How have you considered the specific needs of the members working in IHSC?

Can you describe how your activity or project **supports** the needs of members working in IHSC?



#### Have you extended your work to IHSC?

How can you **widen** your work to ensure it meets the needs of those members working in IHSC? What specific actions can you take to ensure they are positively impacted?

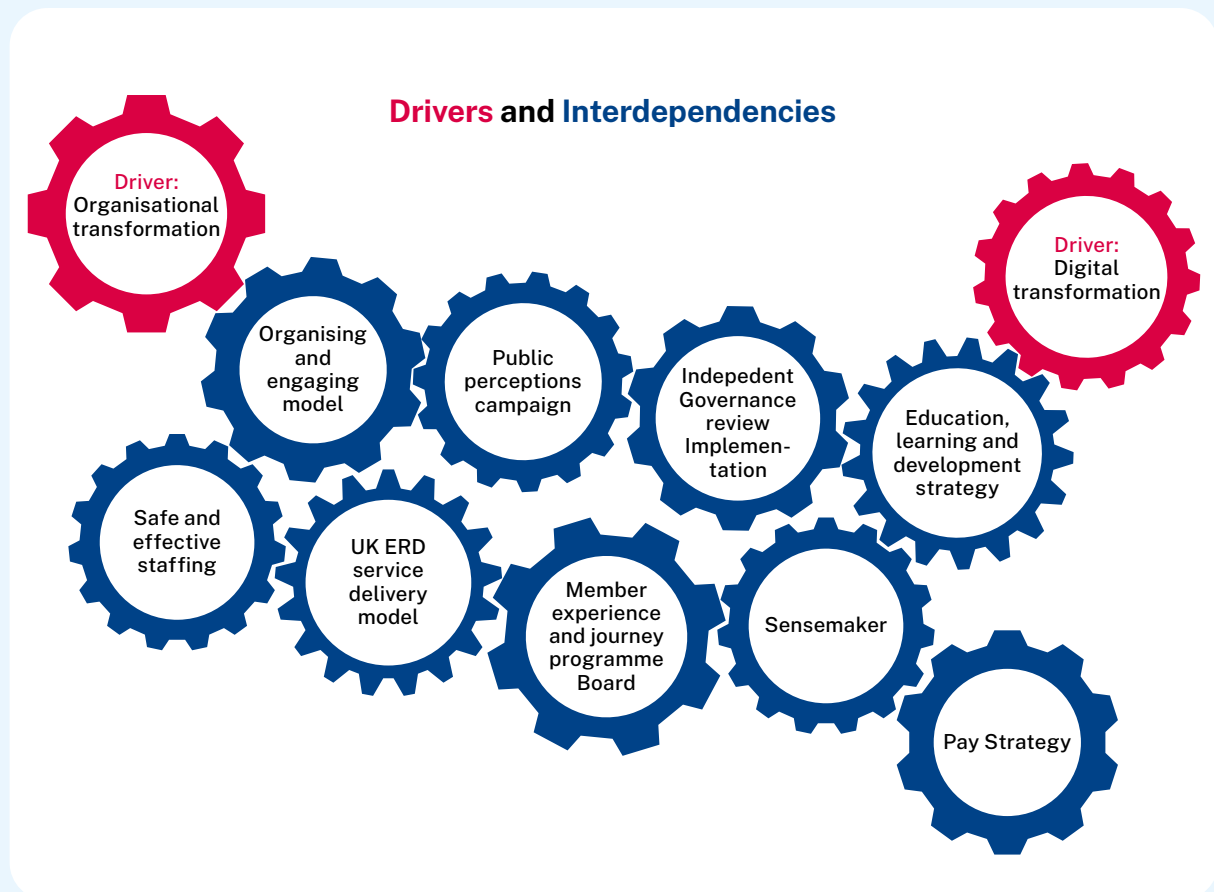


Also in November, we launched a dedicated section of our website for our nursing family who work across social care and independent health services: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/employment-and-pay/nursing-across-social-care-and-independent-health-services>.

As stated, “The RCN – and all our services, benefits and support - is here for all our members, no matter who you are employed by or whereabouts in the UK you work. You have the same 365-day-a-year access to our team of highly trained advisors, the same access to Europe’s largest nursing library, the same chance to attend any of our professional events. And the same opportunities to contribute to the RCN’s forums, networks, branches and committees.”

## Interdependencies

We know that our work does not exist in a vacuum, and to successfully implement the IHSC sector strategy, recognition of the interdependencies across the organisation is crucial (see diagram below). This applies not only to the development of this strategy but establishes an approach that ensures all our future work considers the totality of the membership.



### RCN Professional Framework

Working with colleagues in the nursing department, each of the three workstreams (Professional Practice; Levels of Practice; Career and Capability Frameworks) will include representation from members who work in the independent sector.

### RCN Organising

We are setting up for success by ensuring that we pilot some organising approaches within the independent sector.

### **RCN Education, Learning and Development (ELD) strategy**

Training resources developed for the IHSCS will be incorporated into the ELD catalogue. We are also scoping the ELD requirements of Nursing Support Workers from the independent sector.

### **RCN Internal Governance Review**

We are working with the RCN Governance Support Committee to ensure that the review of RCN UK election guidance considers approaches that will engage and encourage members from the IHSCS to stand for RCN governance roles.

### **RCN Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy**

The development of our new three-year EDI strategy should include messaging on how we can increase engagement amongst members who work in IHSCS.

## **Taking stock**

Health care professionals know the value of taking time to stop and reflect, although it feels like a luxury most of us have not been granted during the past two years. Revisiting the original goals of the IHSC sector strategy is an important step to take: Are they still fit for purpose? Are we doing the right things, in the right way? Many of our members will be involved in Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles of improvement, and the Joint Partnership Board has adopted a similar approach to the IHSC sector strategy. In October 2021, a Gap Analysis of the Transformational Plan was conducted. Conclusions included:

- Workstream 1 (Care home acuity and dependency staffing tool). The care home sector is a complex landscape, with different funding and commissioning arrangements across the UK. There are thousands of different organisations and while there are several large-scale providers, over half have fewer than five employees. There are also different regulators across the UK with different approaches to determining safe staffing. This makes it difficult to design a one-size-fits-all evidence-based tool. For this reason, we are pausing work on this, whilst we go back to our IHSC sector members to ascertain what they need and want. We will also work closely with the Nursing Workforce Standards workstream of our Staffing for Safe and Effective Care programme to map out key interdependencies.
- Some of the original objectives are not in scope or within the gift of the Partnership Board to implement. Where this is the case, we will collaborate with colleagues across the organisation to ensure that the voice of the IHSC sector is represented.
- The November 2020 Council paper referenced over 1,000+ nursing agencies from which we draw members, but how we support them has not been articulated in the Transformational Plan. A new workstream will be developed looking at how we can better support our members who work for nursing agencies.





## RCN representatives



2021 was another very challenging year for our members and our workplace reps. Despite the relentlessness of the pandemic our reps have continued to be at the forefront of representing our members in their workplaces, negotiating with employers, preserving health and safety, and facilitating learning.

In addition to all their workplace contributions and despite their workloads, our reps accomplished record achievements in 2021.

### Rep community

One of our greatest achievements in 2021 was the recruitment and accreditation of hundreds of new reps. Between September 2020 and August 2021, a total of 397 commenced the Foundation module and many progressed to the steward, learning rep and safety rep development modules.

Rep expression of interests also reached a record high in 2021 with almost 1,000 members. We hope the conversation rate will follow through in 2022.

Of those who completed the rep pathway in 2021, younger members, who are traditionally underrepresented within the rep community, increased their numbers. There continues to be greater representation of male reps in comparison to the overall membership, and rep ethnicity is representative of the overall membership. These trends indicate not only growth, but diversity is expanding within our rep community.

All the above mean the RCN's presence in our members' workplaces has increased substantially. We will ensure this upward trend continues during 2022.

### UK Learning and Development Pathway

Another 2021 success was the reaccreditation of the pathway by the Open College Network (OCN) following the annual external quality review.

The Pathway was first accredited by OCN in 2012 and provides a framework that both acknowledges and drives quality, consistency, and improvement.

2021's re-accreditation was particularly meaningful as OCN were reviewing the work of learners and facilitators as we adapted to the unfolding COVID-19 crisis and transitioned from face-to-face to online facilitated learning. The OCN report made special reference to:

- the external moderators were particularly struck that we had positively and successfully responded to the pandemic's impact on learning and continued to provide a flow of new RCN reps into the workplace, supporting members at a time when they have been under extraordinary pressure and are in most need of our support
- the records indicated that the organisation, delivery, assessment, standardisation, and internal moderation of the pathway continued to work effectively
- the pathway provided RCN representatives with the necessary knowledge and understanding of key subject areas for their roles.

The rep evaluation responses for the pathway remain high and attrition low but the OCN report also provided some suggestions that will feed into the UK Curriculum Review that takes place in 2022. We also expect to receive an OCN impact analysis report during 2022.

## Online learning

The delivery of additional online learning also continued throughout the year, and reps received learning sessions on COVID-19, mandatory vaccinations, organising, and of course *Fair Pay for Nursing* so they could fully participate in the pay campaign. There were also development days for branch committees and regional boards across the UK and for members of the Professional Nursing Committee.

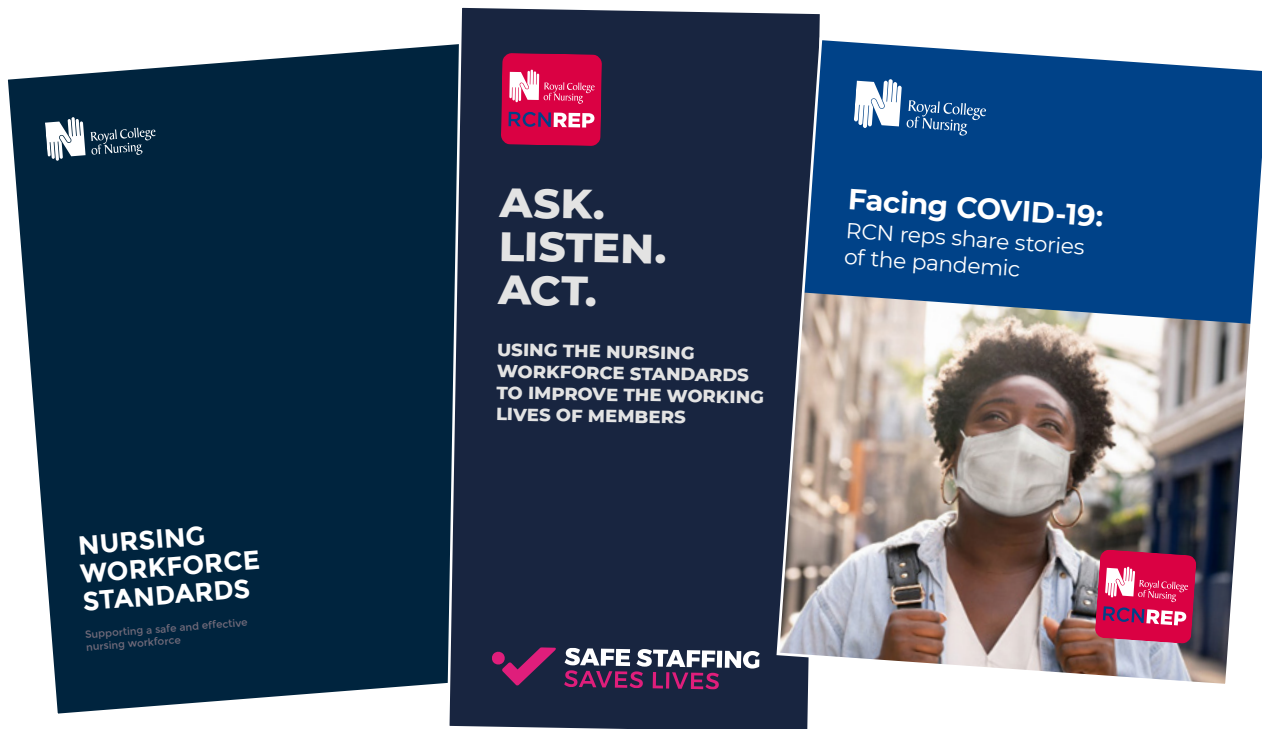
A huge success during the summer was the *Organising for Power* course that saw hundreds of members take part and many of whom were reps. This was swiftly followed by our internal *Skills for Organising* workshops. Upskilling our reps will mean they can better campaign, influence and create change within their workplaces. See page 16 for more information on Organising.

Two Joint Rep conferences took place during 2021, one in March, the other in October and although our reps couldn't be together in person, our rep community networked virtually and received an update from both our General Secretary & Chief Executive and President.

## Review of rep support and supervision

The development of a jointly produced new RCN support and supervision policy for learning reps, safety reps and stewards and commenced in 2021. This is partnership working between our staff and reps and the objective is to provide a policy that defines support and supervision and sets out best practice. It will also set out different forms of support and supervision for reps and how they can work effectively within their branch and with their countries and regions.

This policy will be of particular importance to our new cohort of reps and a useful aide memoir for our existing reps. We expect the policy to launch in mid-2022 following a period of consultation.



## Publications

In October we launched a new publication, *Ask Listen Act* guide for reps in conjunction with our *Nursing Workforce Standards*. This is the second edition of the guide and it highlights the link between working conditions and patient care.

The new edition also aims to provide reps with the knowledge and tools to bring those Standards to life in their workplaces by starting conversations with members, other trade unions and senior members to highlight and address system wide issues.

We also produced *Facing COVID-19: RCN Reps Share Stories of the Pandemic*. The document demonstrates what our reps have achieved for our members during the pandemic and their remarkable response.

The difference our reps made in their workplaces has been incredible and invaluable and it deserves to be celebrated. Their stories are all powerful, moving, and inspiring and include:

- supporting members shielding at home
- assisting with return-to-work plans
- sourcing PPE for members working in the community
- negotiating context within disciplinary policies
- communicating with members when they felt alone
- managing re-deployment scenarios
- raising the profile of the RCN within frontline nursing
- getting employers to waive car parking fees
- educating members around vaccination
- signposting available support
- keeping our members safe.

Their understanding of their workplaces is second to none and the ability to assist on the ground was unparalleled.



## Where to next?

The rep community will continue to develop in 2022 with several initiatives on the horizon. However, at the heart of our future plans is providing reps with the skills and tools they need to carry out their role to the best of their ability and recognising the integral role reps play within the infrastructure of the RCN. Investment and development in reps is undisputable. Our plans include:

- a review and revamp of the UK Curriculum pathway
- new rep recruitment initiatives
- a new support and supervision policy
- continued online learning on topics such as mandatory vaccinations
- a virtual Joint Rep conference on 1 April 2022
- continued up-to-date guidance and support.

## Conclusion

We fully anticipate the rep community will continue to grow and enhance their workplace strength and influence in 2022.

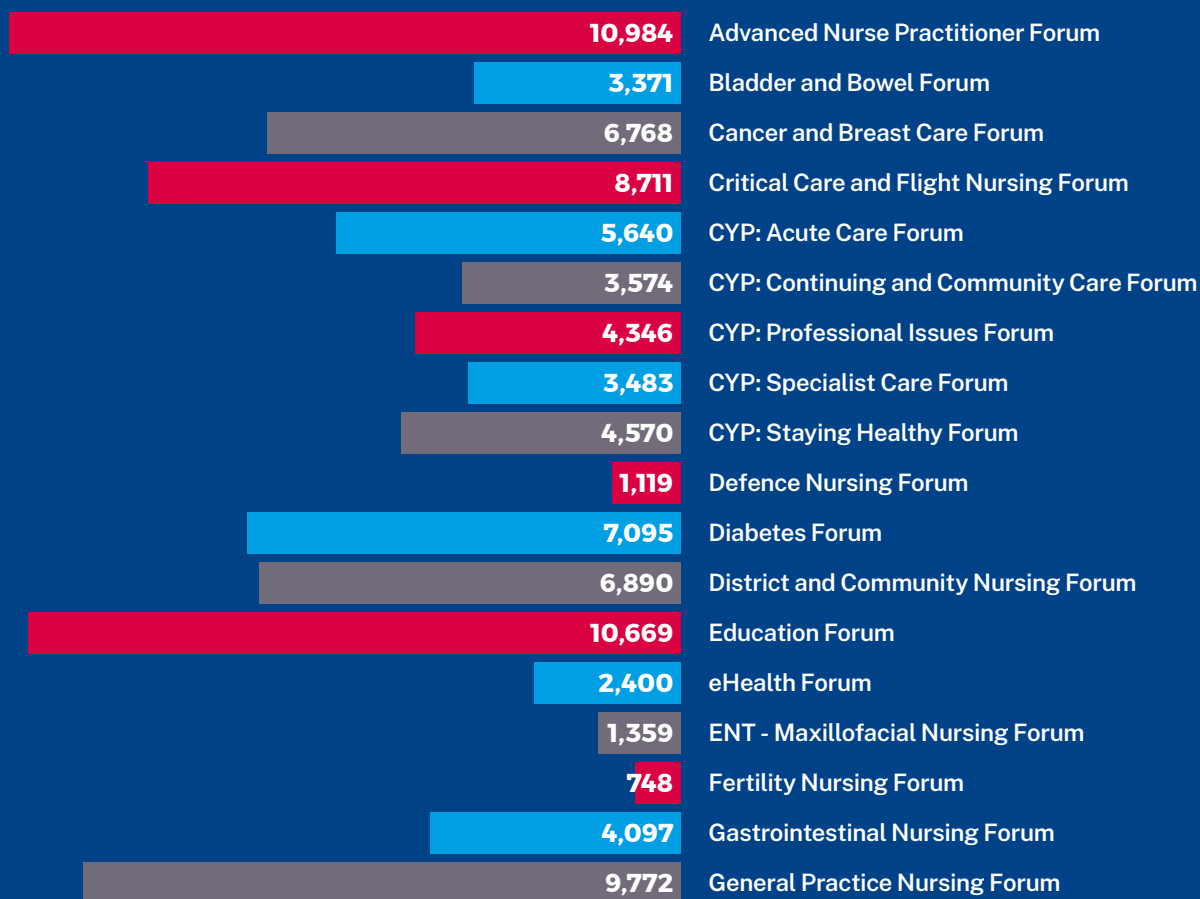


RCN steward, Phil Noyes,  
advising a member

# RCN forums



Our membership consists of clinicians who practise skilfully and safely at the point of care. It also includes members respected within academia, globally recognised in research, experienced leaders at local, regional, and national levels; and countless others working in highly regarded roles across both health and social care and who collectively form one of the biggest expert cohorts in the country. Many of these members are represented within the RCN UK professional forums.

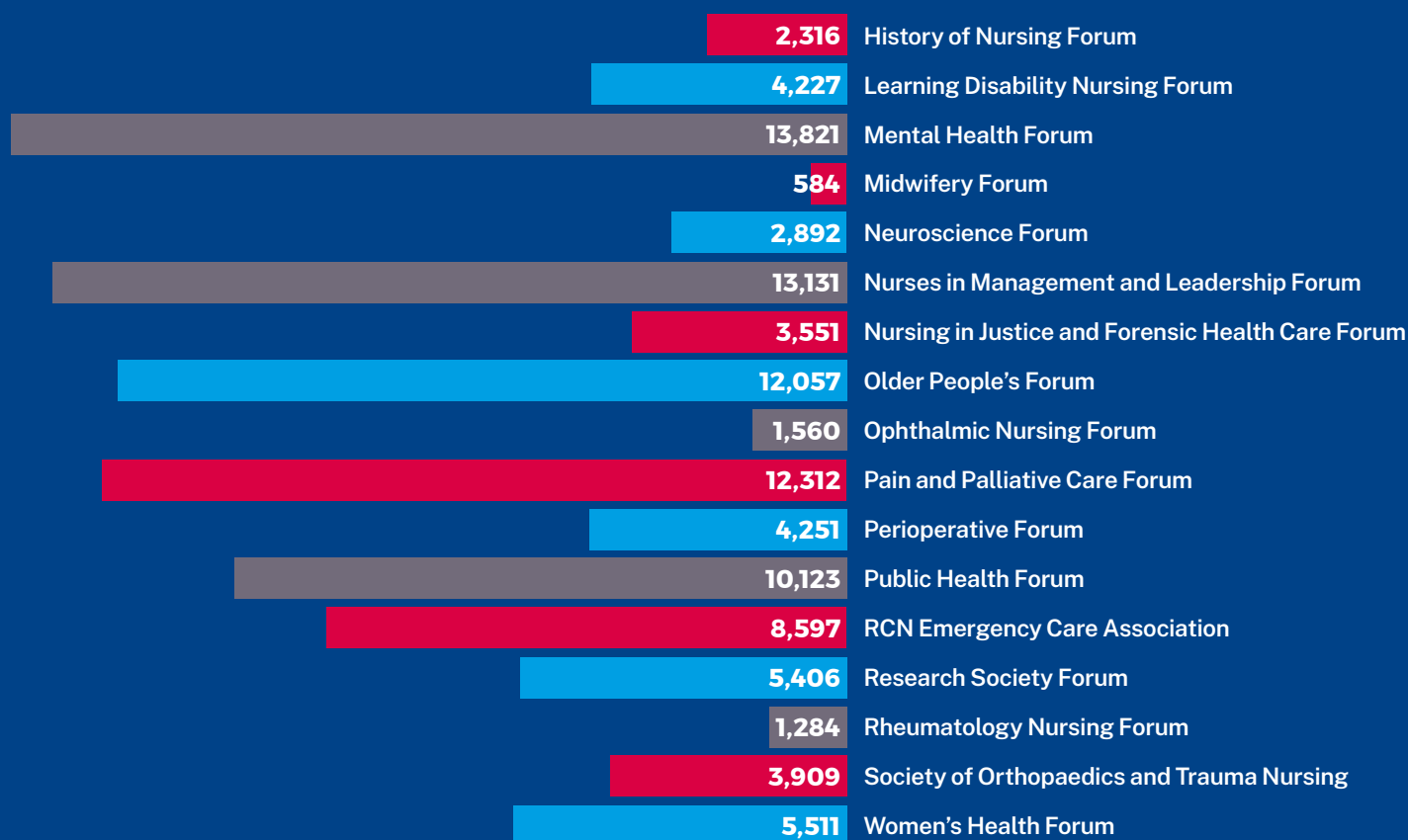


These forums have continued to make a vital contribution to the professional work of the College throughout the year. They have continued to promote best practice in their specialist fields across a range of settings through the development of guidance on standards of practice, educational and other learning resources.

## Forum membership

Many members belong to multiple forums depending on their field(s) of practice. A district nurse may belong to the District and Community Nursing Forum, the Older People's Forum, the Pain and Palliative Care Forum and the Diabetes Forum. Any member can apply to represent their branch or forum as a voting member at our annual Congress – based upon their first-choice forum. Voting members attend our annual Congress debates, and vote on the debates which then shape the work of the RCN.

Forum members have faced extraordinary challenges with the ongoing pressures of COVID-19, and this has at times resulted in some delays in the timelines for their planned work or progress put on hold. However, despite the multiple challenges, the forums have continued to demonstrate their commitment to developing professional nursing practice.







## Publications

A host of forums have been active in creating and updating clinical and professional publications and resources during the year. Many new publications have been developed and launched with the support of funding from the Forums Governance Group (FGG). They include:

- an online resource developed by the Midwifery Forum: Pregnancy and Disability, which focuses on the needs of women who live with a disability during their reproductive years and the support that can be given to improve care
- the *Dementia Care Principles for People in Prisons* with accompanying guidelines, was published by the Older People's Forum, with input from the Nursing in Justice and Forensic Health Care Forum
- guidelines on *Administering Subcutaneous Methotrexate*, published by the Rheumatology Nursing Forum.
- the online *Diabetes Essential* resource, developed by the Diabetes Forum and launched in November to coincide with World Diabetes Day. This resource provides a learning platform on diabetes that can be viewed in its entirety or utilised flexibly depending on the level of pre-existing knowledge on the subject.
- \* a student-focussed resource, *Eyes Right: Older People and Driving*, was published by the Ophthalmic Forum in collaboration with the Older People's Forum in November.

[rcn.org.uk/publications](https://rcn.org.uk/publications)



## Exhibitions and events

Due to the restrictions of the pandemic, the forums have been unable to launch any new exhibitions in 2021, on-line versions of exhibitions from previous years have remained available to view and continue to attract interest. Many online conferences, events and lectures have continued to be delivered throughout the year for members and non-members, to support learning and improvements in care.

The determination of the forums to deliver these events not only demonstrates their commitment to the profession, but the number of attendees during the challenging times of 2021 also indicates the level of interest in the professional subject areas being presented.

Events such as the Education Forum annual two-day conference that was hosted online and the internationally renowned Nursing Research Conference that took place in September were particularly well attended and evaluated.

Additionally, the Mental Health Forum, in collaboration with the RCN library service organised an event with the actor David Harewood, *Maybe I Don't Belong Here: An Audience with David Harewood*, where he discussed his lived experience of mental health services and the quality of care received. This was a highly successful event, with the attendance rate resulting in it being the largest library event within its' 99-year history.

Throughout the year, there has been increased collaborative working between forums, as well as other stakeholders. The all-forum collaborative project on the review of clinical supervision literature, 'Thirty Years of Clinical Supervision, Where We Are Now and What Next', was completed and submitted for open access publication in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. Under the direction of the Professional Nursing Committee, the development of a position statement is to be taken forward in 2022.

## Policy and parliamentary work

The forums have played a vital role, as always, in collaborating to create contemporary content for the Congress fringe programme. A new approach was taken whereby the traditional learning and wellbeing events were combined into an Integrated Education Programme (IEP), that was delivered through a range of on-line educational content and discussions.

Many forums submitted applications for the programme and embraced the collaborative approach. Due to the ongoing restrictions of the pandemic and other wider issues, the IEP became the main focus of Congress 2021. Many forum members from over half of the forums, worked in collaboration with our staff to support the IEP and contributed to the programme and ensured the three-day event was as impactful and successful for members as possible.

Forum members have continued to influence nursing policy and practice standards through a range of representations, based on their clinical expertise and experience they are able bring. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) meetings in relation to specific clinical areas have been a particular event where forum members have represented the RCN to influence and advocate advancing nursing knowledge and professional practice.

## Forum review

The forums and networks review that was overseen and guided by our Professional Nursing Committee, was undertaken in 2021. This was a large and complex piece of work, and the terms of the review reflected the commitment to the professional forums by examining how their functioning and contribution might be optimised and supported to raise the professional offer in the College, to influence nursing and improvements in practice.

The approach to the review was highly collaborative with forum committee members. A number of recommendations have been proposed in the final report under three broad headings, that will support our forums and make a real difference to the way they work in the future:

1. review of the governance processes
2. improved ways of working
3. the support framework for forums.

The report is being considered under the governance of the Professional Nursing Committee and work will continue with members as the implementation of the agreed recommendations are taken forward in 2022. This will ensure that the forums' impact and leadership is recognised as being crucial in helping to influence and lead the professional agenda, as well as looking to shaping the future.

# Thank you



RCN Council would like to thank the external advisers to all RCN Group Committees, for the very significant expertise, knowledge and commitment they bring to the work of the RCN Group.

We would like to thank all members who played an active role in the organisation in 2021, including our learning representatives, safety representatives and stewards, Board, Branch and Committee members, and everyone who has campaigned with us.

We would also like to express our warmest thanks to the companies listed below, for their substantial support in 2021. The same thanks go to all the other organisations, groups and individuals – far too numerous to list here – who help make our work possible.



We would also like to thank Rachel Armitage, Deepa Korea, the Boards and Trustees of RCNi and the RCN Foundation and all of their staff for their tireless work for the RCN Group.

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

Published by the Royal College of Nursing  
20 Cavendish Square  
London  
W1G 0RN  
[www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)

May 2022  
Publication code 010 097

