

A NEW DAWN FOR NURSING:

Five-year strategic plan

A LETTER FROM PAT CULLEN

Dear members

The nursing workforce across the UK is one of our greatest assets. Nursing staff are there for patients and communities from the beginning of life until its end.

Each member of our nursing staff is highly skilled and expert in their own field, delivering life-enhancing care to those whom we are all here to serve. And yet, the talent of nursing staff across all health and social care settings is currently being lost. From the bedside to the board room, from the frontline to the lecture theatre, nurses are leaving the profession and some of the brightest minds we have are saying they can't carry on.

If we don't fundamentally change how nurses are respected and rewarded, there will be fewer and fewer nurses to care for our patients and those in need of our services. Accountability is a simple word but an important one. Nursing staff are accountable for the care they provide but, at the moment, every government, health service and employer is falling short when it comes to creating equal, diverse and inclusive environments for our members.



Registered nurses use evidence-based knowledge, professional and clinical judgement to assess, plan, implement and evaluate high-quality nursing care. Nursing is a safety-critical profession founded on four pillars: clinical practice, education, research, and leadership and management.

The work of registered nurses consists of many specialised and complex interventions. Their vigilance is critical to the safety of people, the prevention of avoidable harm and the management of risks regardless of the location or situation. Their leadership is central to the provision and co-ordination of high-quality, patient-centred care and informed

by their values, integrity and professional knowledge. Responsibility includes leading the integration of emotional, physical, organisational, and cognitive nursing work to compassionately meet the needs of patients, organisations, systems and populations.

Our five-year strategic plan aims to inspire, champion and support the nursing community to deliver the best possible care. To do this, the RCN will continue to transform the way we work and make best use of new technology. We will develop the skills of our staff to ensure that our products and services meet the needs of all our members, readers, subscribers, customers and

beneficiaries. We will continue to shape policy, set clinical standards and support advancement of the profession to improve the health and wellbeing of the public.

OUR COLLECTIVE VISION

The Royal College of Nursing will turn 110 years old during the lifetime of this strategy. We have made it this far by putting down very deep roots, being true to our purpose and values and by keeping ourselves relevant.

The RCN name and brand is strong, and must be safeguarded for the future. Things are changing fast for nursing, and we must keep evolving as an organisation. We must help define and shape the future of health care, professional nursing and trade unionism, rather than simply waiting for it to happen to us.

This work will ensure the strength of our organisation and the nursing professionals we represent for many decades to come.

There will be changes in government and fluctuations in our country's economic prosperity. We may face further health emergencies or moments of international instability. Throughout all of this, protecting our members and the profession will be at the heart of all we do.

Faced with uncertainty, it would be too easy to retreat, to look inwards or think only of consolidating what we have already. Our best interests are served

by ambition, displays of strength and finding allies. We have no automatic right to represent any nursing professional. Every individual who entrusts us with their representation is valued. Each must get the experience they deserve – whatever their point of contact with us.

Half a million members is a strong starting point, and we are still growing. But, quite simply, the Voice of Nursing needs to be stronger. We must grow further and faster.

Our size and the engagement of our members is our collective strength. Hundreds of thousands more nursing professionals are eligible to join the RCN

and we will make a direct appeal to them to join what we have started.

During these five years, we will push all of nursing – registered nurses and nursing support workers alike – onto new professional ground. We will support them in the many changes and challenges they face and aim to secure the pay, terms and conditions that reflect the expertise, the skill and commitment of our people.

We will demonstrate to nursing staff the power that is already in their hands by acting collectively. We will offer greater opportunity to the members to lead their organisation and make it the true and only Voice of Nursing.

We will ask more of our members, too. Being a member of the RCN should feel like an important partnership, not an insurance policy. We are an active movement, not passive protection.

We will shift from a service model to an organising model of business in this period. By selecting the right issues, questions, moments and positions, we anticipate that members will engage in the conversation and take an increasingly strong lead for their profession. We can only expect to represent every single nursing professional if they can believe we can truly represent them. We will embody the diversity we believe in; be proudly anti-racist and tackle all forms of discrimination wherever they arise. As an organisation and as a movement, we will display an exemplary culture.

With a renewed programme of professional and trade union activity led by members who understand what modern nursing is, we will ensure members have confidence in their College and greater confidence in themselves and the future of nursing.

Our name will again be synonymous with high-quality, world-leading education programmes through the new RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence.

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No matter your role or stage in your career the RCN has something to enhance your professional life. And each one of you has something to give back, too. At all times, celebrating the value of nursing. Advancing its reputation, public understanding and the unanswerable case for greater investment in its people.

Nursing has a strong social conscience, and we will stand in solidarity with other movements and organisations working to prevent poverty, disease and war.

We will look to the best in the world when setting our sights on better employment rights and clinical leadership and offer back to the world the best of UK nursing.

Internationalism is central to our outlook. You cannot be collectivists domestically but isolationist on a global stage.

To deliver this strategy for our current and future members we will aim to be an employer of choice. Our skilled workforce will be enabled to be the best they can be. As a membership organisation we will seek to be a model employer that values and respects our staff.

We will demonstrate to our members' employers that staff can be treated well and with dignity and respect. Our workforce will be diverse, highly skilled in what they do, and we will encourage them to continuously improve, allowing them to provide a consistently high quality of service to each other and our members.

We must face the challenges and opportunities of the next five years together: active members, strong partners, enabled staff and international alliances. Only together can we secure changes far greater than we can currently imagine.



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we are determined to deliver fundamental change for our members and staff, to make them proud of the College that acts in their name.

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BACKGROUND

The nursing profession is currently experiencing a crisis of a scale not previously seen within health and care. Vacancy levels are critically high, driven by the compounding factors of an ageing workforce, under-investment in pay, and many nurses and members of the nursing family leaving the profession due to stress levels and an ongoing lack of appropriate recognition and reward.

Issues relating to safe staffing are endemic, with our members consistently escalating their experiences and concerns regarding patient safety.

Successive years of below-inflation pay rises and post-pandemic intense stresses have damaged morale in the nursing workforce. Valuing and investing in nursing have never been more urgent to prevent this profession, and consequently the NHS, collapsing.

We are clear that the status quo cannot, and should not, continue. There is a critical need for a substantial, restorative investment in the nursing workforce before it is too late. Investment is required not only within the NHS but also within the independent health and social care (IHSC) sectors if there is to be an end to the workforce crisis facing the nursing profession. It is our view that only by valuing nursing appropriately and fairly will the necessary system-level changes take place that support the ever-more complex demands of the nursing workforce.

Against the unprecedented backdrop of all four UK countries voting to progress industrial action for the first time in the RCN's 106-year history, this five-year strategic plan sets out our bold and ambitious proposals to deliver the vital changes required for our profession. The plan details the areas in which we will concentrate our efforts and sets out the principles which will drive the improvements we will make for our members.

There is no doubt that the nursing profession and the NHS are facing the most severe challenges ever. This strategic plan has been developed to ensure that we are a modern, responsive and effective organisation that can enable its members to deal with the issues at hand and to challenge and influence policy development at all levels from ward or community setting to the highest office in government.

The current context at the RCN

Changing the culture of an organisation is key to long-lasting and meaningful transformation. In 2021, we sought a wide-ranging and external review of our culture and decision-making processes. Following a KPMG report on governance processes within the RCN, an independent review into the culture of the RCN by Bruce Carr KC was published in October 2022.

This strategic plan has been developed through extensive member and staff engagement, through workshops, online events, surveys and feedback. It has taken the recommendations from both the KPMG review of governance and the Carr report and all recommendations in these reports have been included in this strategic plan.

We are determined to work collectively to deliver fundamental change for our members and staff, to make them proud of the College that acts in their name. Implementing change and tackling long-engrained patterns of behaviour has not been an easy task and challenges remain within the organisation and its membership. Embedding this strategic plan will make the RCN a safe and more inclusive place for our members and staff for many years to come.

OUR UNIQUE HERITAGE

The RCN is a unique organisation. It is the world's largest nursing union and professional body. We represent over half a million nurses, student nurses, midwives, nursing associates and nursing support workers in the UK and internationally.

As a member-led organisation, we work collaboratively with our members to:

- influence governments and other bodies
- improve working conditions
- campaign on issues to raise the profile of the nursing community.

We are bound by a series of charter objectives. These are to:

- promote the science and art of nursing and education and training in the profession of nursing
- promote the advance of nursing as a profession in all or any of its branches
- to promote the professional standing and interests of members
- to assist members who by reason of adversity, ill-health or otherwise are in need of assistance of any nature
- to promote through the medium of international agencies and otherwise the foregoing purposes in other countries as well as in the UK.



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OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The RCN:

- is built on principles of equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging
- represents the profession across all sectors and programmes of care and fields of practice
- is a listening and learning organisation and is driven by data, evidence and member feedback
- is determined to deliver fundamental change for its members and staff, to make them proud of the College that acts in their name
- governance structure is representative of our diverse membership and works in partnership with the RCN Executive team and staff to ensure members' needs are met
- professional nursing and trade union functions are of equal importance and equal value and work to complement each other to create the best outcomes for our members.

THE RCN FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

RCN Council Oversight and scrutiny

Executive Team Delivery of the strategy

GOAL 1
The RCN
as the Voice
of Nursing

GOAL 2
The RCN
has an
engaged,
thriving
and diverse
membership

GOAL 3
The RCN
has a
sustainable
and viable
business
model

GOAL 4
The RCN's governance and positive culture underpin the delivery of the RCN five-year strategic plan



STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This five-year strategic plan has been developed with four agreed goals. These are:

Goal 1

The RCN as the Voice of Nursing.

Goal 2

The RCN has an engaged, thriving and diverse membership.

Goal 3

The RCN has a sustainable and viable business model.

Goal 4

The RCN's governance and positive culture underpin the delivery of the strategy.

These goals are interdependent. However, for the purpose of this strategic plan they have been separated into four goals and their associated priorities. The overarching goals are supported by a number of objectives against which we will measure success.

Goal 1:

The RCN as the Voice of Nursing

Priorities:

- 1.1**
The RCN is the leading national and an international authority in representing the nursing profession, both in its activities as a Royal College and trade union.
- 1.2**
The RCN is the leading national authority on education for the nursing profession.
- 1.3**
The RCN successfully influences public policy in matters affecting nursing across all four countries of the United Kingdom and internationally.

Why are these important and how will we achieve them?

It is important that the RCN, as the largest nursing union and professional body in the world, takes its rightful place as a leading organisation which can influence the development of the profession across the world, and which can positively influence the pay, terms and conditions of nurses across all sectors and all countries.

To enable this to happen we have committed to:

1. further developing international relationships and partnerships through membership of the International Council of Nurses, the European Federation of Nurses Associations and the European Public Services Union
2. creating a new RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence: a centre of learning, leadership and professional activism providing high-quality education and evidence-based practice
3. developing a robust governance structure that builds on recommendations of recent independent reviews, ensuring open and transparent decision making, working in the best interests of our members.

We have prioritised three areas to help us achieve our ambition to strengthen the Voice of Nursing.

Vision for valuing and supporting the profession

As the Voice of Nursing, we will work to improve pay, terms and conditions for all our members. Our vision for pay over the coming five years is borne out of a need to return nursing to a level playing field, relative to both other health and care roles and to other comparable degree-level professions.

The vision is centred around reversing pay inequalities, undoing the damage of successive years of below-inflation pay rises, and moving to restorative action whereby pay, terms and conditions of nurses and the wider nursing family actively value and reward the work that members do.

The vision is purposefully an ambitious one, seeking not only to actively pursue and secure significant improvements in



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terms and conditions, but also to conduct critical examination of those systems and structures within which pay, terms and conditions are considered, negotiated and delivered.

Vision for the Institute

One of our key ambitions is to support nursing staff to provide outstanding nursing care.

The development of the Royal College of Nursing Institute of Excellence will help achieve this goal by providing high-quality education, evidence-based nursing practice and activism. The Institute will take account of national government policies, and a new approach to equality, diversity and inclusion will form the bedrock of all we do. The new Institute will support the College to be the leading voice of nursing and will unify the two

vital roles of the college, the professional and trade union. We use the term ‘nursing family’ as an inclusive term for all the following: nurses, midwives, nursing associates, nursing support workers, student and trainee nurses and nursing associates.

The Institute will have five academies: Nursing Workforce, Nursing Practice, Nursing Leadership, International Nursing and Activism. The academies will become ‘think tanks’ for the development of evidence-based practice, new ways of working and quality improvement supporting our members at all stages of their careers.

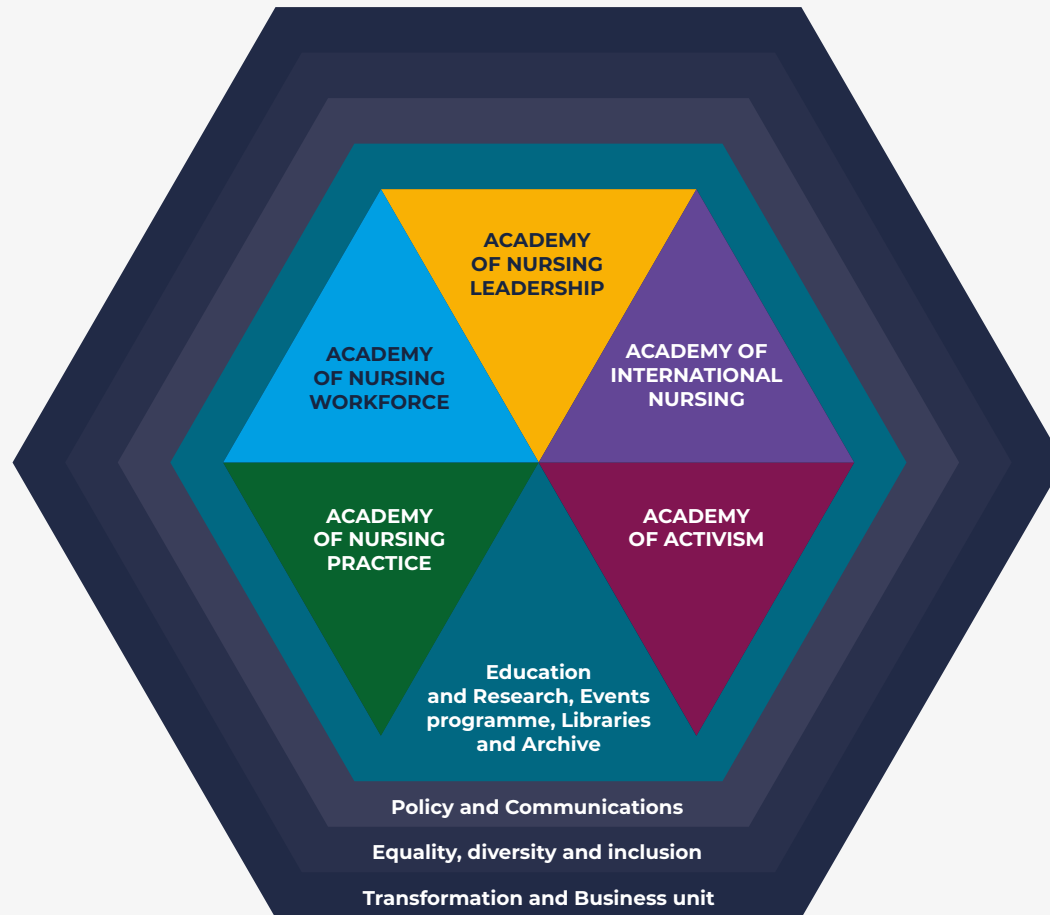
They will be supported by RCN Fellows and member experts from RCN forums and networks as well as external experts where required. RCN member experts will establish themselves as the driving force for change and will be central to

the success of the Institute. International evidence will inform the development of all the academies within the Institute.

The Institute will also create clear pathways for development with a focus on nursing leadership, workforce planning, clinical best practice and academic careers. Through the Academy of Activism, representatives and activists will develop knowledge and skills to lobby governments and deal with employers and workplace challenges.

There is a planned engagement strategy for the Institute, and it is vital that staff and members alike across the RCN can inform and contribute to its development. This will ensure that staff and member expertise is fully utilised, and partnerships are developed with other organisations for the benefit of members and their patients and the wider health and social care organisations.

RCN INSTITUTE OF NURSING EXCELLENCE



Vision for influencing safe staffing

The current RCN pay campaign has clearly highlighted that safe staffing is essential for patients and nursing staff. The current staffing crisis has demonstrated and exacerbated existing, long-standing issues with health and care workforce supply and retention in the UK. Nursing staff levels are extremely challenging and in many areas are not acceptable to staff or patients.

The Westminster government committed to developing a policy framework on safe staffing. It is essential the RCN takes a leading role in this work for its members and starts to define safe staffing utilising strong evidence-based research.

Robust policy and investment measures for the short and long term are clearly required as a matter of urgency. As a minimum, every country in the UK must have accountability for health and care workforce enshrined in legislation, and every country must have a government-funded health and care workforce plan.

In 2021, we published the first UK Nursing Workforce Standards. These standards were developed through review of current research literature and in collaboration with expert reference groups contributing professional expertise. Using our Nursing Workforce Standards, our priority will be to focus on their dissemination, implementation and evaluation.



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The RCN is also embarking on a programme of work to create a UK Professional Framework for Nursing that is inclusive of all settings. A key objective of this work will be a professional practice workstream which will review the principles of nursing practice, definitions, authority and value of nursing.

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Our aim in England is to enforce staffing for safe and effective care by securing a change in law to ensure that the Secretary of State for Health and Care has accountability for workforce planning and supply. The first step of this – agreeing the development of a safe staffing policy framework – has been achieved following negotiations between the RCN and the Department of Health. The RCN will be partners in this work.

In Wales, we will continue to challenge the Welsh government to extend nurse staffing legislation into community, mental health and care homes.

In Scotland, significant work is underway to influence the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act, to support members to understand what the legislation will mean for them and to ensure effective long-term scrutiny.

We have successfully secured a Ministerial Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce in Scotland to recommend actions to address nursing retention and recruitment challenges and we will work to ensure the taskforce delivers on its commitments.

In Northern Ireland, work is ongoing to review the Delivering Care Policy Framework and the process of moving policy into legislation continues. The Nursing and Midwifery Task Group recommendations will also progress workforce stabilisation and a retention strategy for nursing in Northern Ireland.

Goal 2:

The RCN has an engaged, thriving and diverse membership

Priorities:

2.1

The RCN represents the diversity of its membership.

2.2

The RCN membership is central to Royal College and trade union activities.

2.3

The RCN has an active and visible Representatives network and professional forums across all sectors.

Why are these important and how will we achieve them?

We have a diverse membership. We have members from across the world, from every race and religion and belief, from every field of nursing and role, and from every sector across the health spectrum. We have members in the NHS, across independent sectors, in prisons, in the armed forces, in education and training, in social care and in voluntary sectors. 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.

We are determined that through implementation of this strategy that every member, no matter where they work or who they are, will see themselves and their needs reflected within the RCN.

We have prioritised six areas to help us achieve our ambition for an engaged, thriving and diverse membership.

Vision for equality, diversity and inclusion

We will build a culture that champions equality, diversity and inclusion. We will support and develop our members and staff and listen and learn from reviews, reports and member feedback. The RCN Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (EDI) will set out a pathway for improvement across our membership. This strategy will be the catalyst for us to enable reform and become more inclusive in everything we do. We will challenge all inequality and discrimination and bring about a cultural change which empowers everyone. We will build an inclusive organisation which fosters a sense of belonging. We all have a responsibility to make this change happen.

Over the next five years we will change our infrastructure and take practical action to address all the concerns that have been raised. To achieve this ambition, minimise any risk and strengthen assurance for delivery, we will prioritise our actions by focussing on five pillars: **accountability, leadership, metrics, narrative, and voice.**

Structuring the EDI strategy in this way will provide focus and needs deliberate and collective effort. This strategic plan will equip leaders and managers with skills to support their teams, measure progress, enhance leadership and engender civility and respect to all.

We appreciate that what we know in 2023 will not be the same in 2027, so the EDI strategy is underpinned by plans and actions that will be kept under review by various groups and bodies throughout the next five years. We will put robust monitoring practices and processes in place to measure the changing landscape. We will be led by the latest research and best practice, as well as feedback and intelligence, so we constantly improve and extend the reach and impact of this strategy throughout this period.

Leadership at all levels remains integral to the delivery and implementation of the strategic plan. Leadership will need to be visible and evident in the action plans that will be developed by governors and staff throughout the organisation.

We know this work will be challenging but we are committed to transforming the RCN from a non-discriminatory, non-racist organisation to an anti-discriminatory and anti-racist one.

Vision for our trade union representatives and activists

The RCN is unique: a modern and progressive professional body and trade union. To consolidate and strengthen our professional activist base, we will transform the ways in which we engage, grow and develop our activists. This transformation is critical to secure an active membership that can meaningfully and proactively build consensus, advocate collectively, and win change in workplaces across the UK.

We aim to enhance all forms of professional activism and engagement. Along with traditional rep learning and development, we will build and work alongside engaged, self-organised communities of active members. Key commitments involved in bringing about this change include:

- establishing an RCN Activist Academy that will harness and grow RCN activists in all forms
- trebling the number of RCN workplace representatives and growing their influence and ability to represent members
- reinvigorating our network of RCN branches
- increasing support for Student Ambassadors to win change for student members including pathways beyond graduation to move student activists into becoming workplace activists

- providing retired members with a clear route into RCN campaigning and activism
- proactive engagement with and development of self-organised communities of active members seeking to influence across their various identities and protected characteristics.

Our recent industrial action has shown that when members unite behind a common purpose change is possible and we will build on this momentum for the future.

Vision for our professional forums

RCN forums provide members with the opportunity to meet and work alongside other members who have a shared interest in a particular area of professional nursing practice. There are

currently 35 professional forums with thousands of active members. These forums are hugely valuable and support the functions of the professional nursing agenda within the RCN by:

- leading the development of knowledge, guidance and standards within specialist area of interest
- the development and review of publications relevant to their sphere of activity
- influencing policy development
- providing an expert member view to the RCN on their sphere of activity
- representing the RCN with relevant external bodies and stakeholders
- representing the RCN on relevant specialist working groups
- contributing to national and local consultations
- the development and delivery of specialist workshops, conferences and events.

We recognise the need for greater investment and an improved governance infrastructure for the forums. This was highlighted within the Forum and Networks Review Report.

Implementing the forum recommendations is a priority. Work has already begun in looking at our offer of training and development for forum chairs, and RCN accreditation for activists within forums but there is much more to do to ensure employers understand the role of forum chairs and how having employees within RCN forums is beneficial for organisations. This work will continue throughout the life of the strategic plan with an aim of promoting forum activism and ensuring equity with trade union activism.



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Vision for our independent sector

We will continue to develop and implement the IHSC strategy to ensure all our services are of the same standard for all members. Members who work outside the NHS will see themselves represented in all RCN activities. They will continue to have the same access to our team of highly trained staff, 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 and elected governance positions.

Using feedback from a variety of sources we will develop better knowledge and understanding of all sectors where we have members. Linking with the Institute will ensure tailored offers of professional

development and education and the new Reps Academy will help RCN improve representation for our members in IHSC sectors.

To ensure this work is embedded across the whole of the organisation, a significant investment approved by Council in January 2022 has allowed us to create 12 new Independent Health and Social Care Lead Nurse posts in our teams in Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and in each of the nine England regions. This has created a network of skilled, knowledgeable staff who can work with our representatives and professional forums to inform, influence and lead to develop excellence in independent health and social care with our members.

We have developed a dedicated section of our website for members who work across social care and independent health services.

Expanded and active membership in the IHSC sectors will allow us to exert strategic influence. We will extend trade union and collective bargaining arrangements across independent health and social care sectors, to create a level playing field with the arrangements that exist within the NHS and public sector.

Vision for member engagement

One of the most important things we do is to listen to the voice of our members and actually hear what they are telling us. We must ensure we listen to the many and not just the vocal few.

From 2022 and into the first year of this strategy, the College has seen unprecedented engagement levels. The Fair Pay for Nursing campaign unified the membership and the positive engagement and participation of members required the RCN to work differently.

The success has not been that the RCN discovered 'how' to engage members but was able to demonstrate its relevance and give members a clear reason 'why' they should engage. Our apparent relevance to members and responsiveness to their needs precipitated the large-scale engagement that the College had desired for many years.

Retaining that participatory approach and the strong, positive relationship between individual members and the College will be key to the success of this plan.

New digital methods of communication in addition to more tested and offline methods were used and the evaluation of this work will guide future campaigning and advocacy.

One of these new methods involves SenseMaker, which has been rolled out across the UK following successful implementation in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

SenseMaker is a storytelling tool that allows RCN to capture the lived experience of our members. By using a storytelling approach individuals can present their unique experiences of work and their professional journey and the challenges, joys or achievements they are experiencing. SenseMaker will help provide sufficient diversity and volume of experiences collected within stories. This volume and

diversity will allow us to make sense of the extremely complex, ambiguous, and rapidly changing environments in which our members practice.

By analysing these stories, we can identify themes rather than focus on a small number of individuals' feedback. This information in turn will allow us to make much more informed decisions about what our members want and need, the resources we should be developing and the support we should be giving.

Vision for organising

Our organising approach will empower members through training and role modelling to build collective strength within workplaces and ensure that decision makers not only *listen* but also *act* on the issues that matter to nursing. We have identified eight principles that will run throughout the Organising strategy and will be embedded into all our work.

1. We will build on the long tradition of RCN members fighting for positive change in health and social care, for nursing staff and patients.
2. We will utilise an array of tactical components drawn from campaigning, advocacy, mobilising, learning and development.
3. We will not be afraid to make our voice heard and be unpopular with decision makers if needed.

4. All members have a role in using their voice and exercising their power to create change at every level.
5. No issue is too small or too large; what matters is addressing the issues that are important to members and for patient care, be it at national, regional or local levels.
6. Members are the experts of their workplace and their profession, and will be encouraged to draw on their own experiences.
7. We will support members and staff to work together in equal partnership.
8. Equality, diversity, and inclusion will underpin all aspects of our work to ensure activity reflects the breadth of our membership irrespective of any protected characteristics, employment sector, role or geography.

With a successful organising model, we expect the following outcomes to be achieved for members and staff:

- Increased capacity to act within workplaces.
- Nursing staff harness their power to implement or achieve change.
- Collective ownership of problems, issues and solutions.

Goal 3:

The RCN has a sustainable and viable business model for the benefit of staff and members

Priorities:

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| 3.1
The RCN will have an engaged workforce motivated by having the best possible experience of work. | 3.2
The RCN will transform its ways of working to be an adaptable and proactive organisation. | 3.3
The RCN will expand non-membership income to reduce the overall reliance on membership income. | 3.4
The RCN will have the financial resources, systems and infrastructure to maintain the sustainability and viability of the RCN. |
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Why are these important and how will we achieve them?

The RCN is a large employer, and it is vital that we attract and retain the best and brightest staff to ensure our members get the service they want and need. Our Royal Charter is as relevant today as when it was first written. But how we deliver its objectives must constantly evolve and transform to meet the challenges of the 21st century and the complex world our members work in. It is also vitally important that we are a financially stable organisation to enable us to respond to or act on unplanned events or cost-of-living challenges. Above all we must ensure we use members' money wisely and ensure value for money and a high-quality offer to all in membership.

We have prioritised five areas to help us achieve our ambition for a sustainable business model.

Vision for legal representation, employment and member relations

We have one of the largest in-house legal teams in the trade union movement and our lawyers are committed to providing expert legal services to our members across the UK.

We also pride ourselves on bringing test cases that have an impact not just on individuals or our members, but all claimants and we regularly pursue cases in the higher courts to achieve justice for nursing in all forms.

Our results speak for themselves, but we are constantly ambitious to do more. We aim to be the provider of choice for all members to meet their legal needs. To do that we will constantly update and transform our legal services and we ensure we attract and retain the best legal talent.

Vision for being an excellent employer

Our staff matter. It is through our people that we are able to deliver for our members and provide the high-quality products and services that keep our members and other customers with us, and attract new ones every day.

In this five-year period, we will continue to recognise the critical role our staff play in our success. We know that to be a credible and influential trade union and professional body we must lead by example in the way we treat our own staff.

As an exemplary employer, we aspire to create the best possible experience of work and working life for our staff, to support and empower them through people-centred policies, practices and provisions, and to recruit, develop and engage our people to thrive in their roles.

Vision for leveraging new technology

It is vital that our system infrastructure is and remains fit for purpose, and that it supports modern, standardised delivery, along with high levels of security and privacy. It must also enable flexible and continual evolution of our digital products and services at pace to meet changing customer needs and expectations.

Within the RCN we are committed to ensuring we make best use of new technology and digital development, which will be aligned with strategic and business objectives. This will enable us to ensure appropriate systems, skill sets and resources are in place to achieve goals, to support requirements and to drive innovation.

Technology and digital product development will be underpinned by the

desire to improve member experience. Members will be recognised as individuals with a number of roles and different preferences for how they engage with the RCN.

Member and customer products and service development will be driven by real-time, accurate data, insights and product testing and feedback, using best practice and involving collaborative teams. Members will benefit from personalised self-serve services and products 24/7 across all modern devices and browsers, nationally and internationally, with segmented marketing and product offers based on role, setting, region, level of practice and other relevant segments.

Innovation will be driven by in-house, expert, empowered teams guided by product management, user experience and user interface, we will harness and nurture digital talent to deliver accessible, inclusive, intuitive products and services

that represent customer needs, our brand and our values.

There will be a commitment to automation which will allow removal of any repetitive manual tasks undertaken by staff. This will create resources to facilitate better productivity and higher value activities, thereby leading to better value for money, removing system inefficiencies and delivering cost reductions.

We intend to innovate and develop best practice processes, showcasing leadership in the digital technology space. We will also support training and provide leadership in digital technology for the nursing profession.

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it is vital that we can attract and retain the best and brightest staff to ensure our members get the service they want and need.

Introduction



Goal 1



Goal 2



Goal 3



Goal 4



Vision for being a data-mature organisation

In today's digital age, the importance of data-led professional membership support and trade unionism has become increasingly apparent.

Data is the key to understanding members and their needs. We have traditionally relied on surveys and interviews to understand the needs and concerns of our members. While these methods are still useful, they can be time-consuming and limited in their scope.

By contrast, data analytics tools can provide a much broader and more comprehensive picture of the workforce. For example, by analysing employee data, such as absenteeism rates, turnover rates, and productivity levels, we can identify

patterns and trends that may not be immediately apparent. This information can be used to inform negotiations and also development of best practice guidance and policy positions.

In addition, data can help to identify and address inequalities. We have a responsibility to ensure that all members are treated fairly and equitably. However, without data, it can be difficult to identify where inequalities exist. By analysing data we will identify areas where there are disparities based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, or age. This information can then be used to advocate for policies and practices that address these disparities and promote fairness and equity.

Data can also help to identify emerging issues and trends. The world of work is constantly evolving, and trade unions need to be able to adapt to these changes.

Data will shape the RCN and help us to understand issues like appropriate safe staffing levels and maximise the educational and commercial offer for members.

Finally, data will help to inform strategic decision making. We operate in a complex and rapidly changing environment. By analysing data on a range of factors such as economic indicators, industry trends, and political developments, we can make informed decisions about their priorities and strategies. This can help them to be more effective in advocating for the interests of their members and achieving their goals.

Vision for being a business and growing non-member income

Our vision is that we will continue to be a well-run organisation maintaining a framework of effective fiscal management through robust financial controls, systems, and processes together with strong financial disciplines. This allows for timely and accurate reporting resulting in detailed cost control and effective cashflow management as well as meeting all its audit, tax, compliance and reporting requirements.

Part of our financial strategy is to ensure that we can self-fund investment in services and infrastructure as and when required for the benefit of our members. Maintaining strong reserves allows for financial stability and so contributes to the achievement of our members' priorities and objectives.

Having a stable financial footing will provide us with the platform and flexibility to fund our long-term strategic aims. It will allow the organisation to plan for the future, including developing non-membership fee income streams. This includes setting financial goals, aligning targets, creating business plans together with regular reviews with corrective actions if required.

Growing non-membership fee-related income streams is an important goal. Firstly, it allows the organisation to become less reliant on membership income. It also gives financial stability, enabling it to plan and execute long-term initiatives with confidence and can provide a steady source of revenue allowing us to fund new projects.

Furthermore, generating non-membership income streams can help us reach new audiences and expand our impact beyond the current membership base. This can lead to new members as well as potential sponsorships ultimately strengthening the organisation's mission and impact.

Goal 4:

The RCN's governance and positive culture underpin the delivery of the RCN five-year strategic plan

Priorities:

4.1

The RCN will live its mission, vision, values and core behaviours.

4.2

The RCN will have effective and inclusive governance.

4.3

A coordinating function which ensures that change initiatives add value and are delivered consistently.

Why are these important and how will we achieve them?

The RCN is a complex organisation which is underpinned by our Royal Charter, Standing Orders, Regulations and Policies. It is a member-led organisation that exists to represent nurses and nursing, promote excellence in practice and shape health policy. It is both a trade union and a professional body. To this end, we require an effective and well-functioning governance framework to ensure the organisation is effective, proactive and responsive to member needs.

We have identified **38** unique recommendations originating from the total of **86** recommendations contained within Carr, KPMG and previous reviews of governance stemming back to 2018. We are committed to implementing these recommendations to help us achieve our

ambition for an effective governance structure and a more positive culture.

We have prioritised two areas to help us achieve our ambition for robust governance and a positive culture.

Vision for governance

Our vision is to have an effective corporate governance structure embedded at the heart of the RCN. This will be achieved through development and delivery of a robust governance framework that is trusted by all including our members, staff and external stakeholders.

A revised governance framework will enable our Council and Executive Team to work together in partnership to deliver our strategic plan with meaningful involvement of and engagement with members. It will also support the future direction of the organisation as we adapt to meet challenges throughout the next five years.

There will be effective and transparent decision making with clear delegated authority and lines of responsibility and accountability. Roles will be clear, and individuals will work together positively in an inclusive environment which embraces the need for cultural change within its governance structures and ways of working.

Effective management of the organisation will be delivered through an exemplary financial, risk and control framework which can withstand the most thorough scrutiny and audit.

We will adopt best governance practice and ensure our governance documents are fit for purpose. Our governance structures will be of a size and composition which will enable delivery of their function and will include an appropriate balance of skills, expertise and diversity to ensure optimum performance.

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**effective management
of the organisation will
be delivered through an
exemplary financial, risk and
control framework which can
withstand the most thorough
of scrutiny and audit**

All those in Council, committee and board roles will be supported by first-class induction, learning and development to enhance their contribution to the RCN.

Finally, and most importantly all those in governance positions within the College, whether on Council, boards or committees or on the Executive Team will demonstrate the utmost integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Vision for culture

Organisational culture exists in many forms. It creates distinctions between one organisation and another. It conveys a sense of identity for organisation members. It allows members to commit to something larger than their own self-interest. It is the social glue that helps hold the organisation together by providing appropriate standards for what

employees and members should say and do. Finally, culture serves as a sense-making and control mechanism that guides and shapes employees’ attitudes and behaviours.

The commonly accepted understanding of culture is “the way we do things around here”.

Every one of us – whether staff or members – influences the culture of our organisation. And our unique culture is something that sets us apart from other organisations, as a trade union and professional body as well as an employer. It can help us to recruit and retain both staff and members, each of whom add to our collective power as the voice of nursing.

Over the lifetime of this new five-year strategic plan we will deliver a cultural change programme.



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“
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Led by our aspirations and our values as an employer and as a trade union and professional body, this programme will help us to shift our culture and better equip us to deliver for our members and the wider nursing community.

We, and our members, have faced many challenges over the last few years and we must move on and be a well-functioning organisation where people are welcome, represented, valued and appreciated. In an organisation of over half a million members it is inevitable that there will be disagreements and differences of opinion.

That in itself is not an issue, but when it becomes divisive and sets member against member it becomes disruptive and bad for the RCN, our reputation, our members and our staff and ultimately it weakens our position as a trade union and a professional body.

The review of governance, the EDI strategy, and the other priorities contained within this five-year strategic plan should go some way to help with some of the recent issues we have faced. However, there is a commitment to do more.

We will develop processes to enable members to express their concerns or issues in a professional, constructive and respectful way. This will enable the capture of differing views and opinions and will enable engagement, explanation, information sharing and consideration of opposing views. Healthy debate will be encouraged within the RCN and this will

be welcomed and will make us stronger and more responsive.

At all times and without exception members and staff will be expected to adhere to the RCN Respect Charter and unreasonable behaviours will not be tolerated. We are an organisation made up of professionals and we will expect that all interactions between members, our staff and our key stakeholders are conducted accordingly.

WHERE ARE WE WITH OUR STRATEGIC PLAN TO DATE?

This document lays out the RCN's five-year strategic plan and the associated priorities. As pieces of work are finished and embedded into business-as-usual, new priorities will emerge. To that end the plan will be continuously reviewed, and updates and progress will be shared with members through the Annual Report.

This document also only identifies the high-level priorities. There will be a full action plan with timescales, responsibilities, business cases, funding requirements and key performance indicators that sit under the strategic plan. This will be a real-time document and will be shared with Council on a quarterly basis.

Achievement against the strategic plan will form part of our reporting mechanisms to the Audit Committee and our members will receive regular updates on progress.

STRATEGIC STAGES

COMPLETE	IN PROGRESS		
1. Strategy developed and signed off	2. Creating the delivery roadmap	3. Delivery of activities	4. Monitor delivery of strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy consultation and development • Signed off by ET and Council November 2022 • Publish strategy document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives and activities agreed • Confirm owners and timelines • Prioritisation (as required) • Agree sequencing of activities • Agree funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop delivery plans • Governance established • Establish reporting • Monitor progress against plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continual review of objectives and activities to ensure strategy vision will be delivered

Ongoing communications and engagement




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although our strategy is ambitious, we believe if we all work together with our members and for the good of the College, we can achieve our goals.

Our strategic plan identifies the high-level priorities for the RCN over the next five years. It sets out our ambitions that have been identified and tested through extensive member engagement and feedback. Underpinning this strategy will be a detailed action plan with timescales, responsibilities, business cases, funding requirements and key performance indicators.

This underpinning action plan will be a real-time, live document that will be reported against to Council on a quarterly basis. Achievement against the plan will form part of RCN reporting mechanisms to the Audit Committee and members will receive regular updates on progress.

A successful strategic plan is measured on its delivery. Although our strategic plan is ambitious, we believe if we all work together with our members and for the good of the College, we can achieve our goals. Flexibility and agility will be a key requirement of how we work as we respond to changing events and challenges.

For our staff, the plan will provide the framework for everything they do, shaping day-to-day actions and becoming embedded in our decision making. It will be supported by effective governance processes and a new culture which helps us engage better with all our members and stakeholders. Above all the strategic plan will deliver for our members and our staff and ultimately our patients.



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010 891 | May 2023