

# GET OUT THE VOTE!

## A TOOLKIT FOR RCN MEMBERS

To build the future that nursing deserves, we must get loud and make our voices heard. **To do this, we need to do one simple thing: get RCN members to vote.** The tips in this toolkit will help you **Get Out The Vote!**



# WHAT IS GET OUT THE VOTE?

Get Out The Vote (GOTV) focuses on encouraging every RCN member to use their voice by participating in consultations and ballots. This involves going for a face-to-face chat with your colleagues to:

- 1. remind members,** about consultation/ballot dates and procedures
- 2. provide information,** on voting procedures or assist with issues like missing ballots
- 3. encourage turnout,** particularly among supportive or undecided members
- 4. build personal connections,** to motivate members to cast their ballots and encourage others.



# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO GET OUT THE VOTE?

Nursing staff are the backbone of health and care services. We see what our patients, profession and society needs. That's why it's important our voices are heard.

As union members we vote on issues facing our profession, our jobs and our communities.

When we turn out for nursing our voice is clear and strong. Some of the issues that might need to be voted on are pay offers or awards, changes in workplace management, changes in workplace management, union leadership or specific local issues that impact us as workers.

During any consultation, ballot or election this direct, face-to-face approach increases voter turnout and member participation.

- **Every vote matters** – the more votes, the stronger the voice: A large majority turnout in your workplace is vital to make the view of RCN members heard. It gives your RCN reps, officers or negotiators power to influence and win; giving nursing more power going forward.
- **You have power:** You've shown the power the nursing workforce has when we stand together. You and your colleagues need to make your voice heard. The more of us who vote, the stronger we are for future.
- **No one else can do this for you:** You are the leaders of your workplace; you have the relationships, opportunities and passion to turn votes out. If everyone relied on others to fight for change, there would be no fight or change at all.



## WE CARE, WE ORGANISE, WE WIN!

Getting every member to vote in a consultation or ballot is crucial and that's where you come in. A high turnout gives your fellow members who you've elected to lead the RCN the clear signal they need on the membership's views.

# WHAT DO WE VOTE FOR?

As a trade union, the RCN asks members to vote on issues, pay awards and in member elections in different ways. This is because of the statutory requirements that apply to trade unions. While voting methods vary, the skills and tactics to help encourage your fellow members are the same. It's essential to get out the vote!

## THE RCN CAN CONSULT YOU THROUGH AN ONLINE VOTE

As your union, the RCN may ask you and your colleagues to vote in an online consultation or consultative ballot if:

- You have received a pay offer or award from your employer or a government
- If your employer has proposed changes to your terms and conditions at your workplace

You can vote digitally, or sometimes by SMS, because the RCN is asking for your view or perspective. Your vote will support your RCN rep, officers or negotiators to advocate for what you and fellow RCN members believe is fair and reasonable.

## THE RCN CAN ASK YOU TO VOTE ON STATUTORY DECISIONS AND ELECTIONS

Government regulations require election of some trade union officials and decisions to take industrial action to be conducted by statutory postal ballot. This means that you cannot vote online. With your postal vote, you are taking part in statutory decisions on collective RCN action. This means that to elect RCN council members or key decisions:

- A ballot paper will be posted to your home address by an independent scrutineer
- You must fill out and return your ballot paper in the post by a set deadline.

The RCN has campaigned to reduce these barriers on your voice, and while the Westminster government has committed to reduce restrictions, the option to ballot digitally on statutory issues will not be available for some time. A ballot for industrial action is only valid if voter turnout meets minimum thresholds set by governments. In England, Wales and Scotland at least 50% of eligible members balloted must cast a vote and the majority must vote in favour of industrial action.

In the NHS, ballots can take place at employer level to seek a mandate for strike action at a single employer, or all members employed directly by the NHS where industrial action could be taken at all NHS employers in a country.

To successfully get out the vote, there are 4 factors to think about. You can get ahead with a bit of planning but don't worry you can still succeed if you focus your efforts on these 4 factors.

## THE WHO, HOW, WHEN AND WHY TO GOTV

1. Who - Know where RCN members are: map your workplace
2. How - Ensure everyone can vote: update your details
3. When - Stay a step ahead: the GOTV timetable and key details
4. Why - Boosting turnout: tactics and conversations

## 1. KNOW WHERE RCN MEMBERS ARE: MAP YOUR WORKPLACE

Your goal is for RCN members to vote on the decision or issue on the consultation or ballot in front of you.

It's easy to miss out members in areas of your workplace you might not be aware of. Mapping your workplace is a great place to start. You want to build a network to help get out the vote and ideally establish a point of contact in each work area. Mapping will help you with looking at your workplace and start to work out where RCN members are, where you are strong, and what areas need more work to ensure you have high turnout.

### WHO KNOWS WHO?

Think about where your fellow members might be clustered, which shifts, wards, departments, specialties or teams have points of contact, which areas you have already been visited, and where you could be missing votes. Start to write this down so you can develop a picture of your workplace to inform your GOTV strategy. This knowledge can help you in future RCN activities.

Below is an example template for workplace mapping:

DEPARTMENT	LOCATION	SHIFT	NUMBER OF RNS AND HCSW	POINT OF CONTACT	NOTES
Endoscopy	Basement	Day	4 RNs, 8 HCSWs	Jane Dobbs	2 HCSWs have taken details to join (chase up next week)
Critical Care	3rd Floor	Night			Still need to find a point of contact.

### WHAT IS A POINT OF CONTACT?

Encouraging other members to join you in GOTV activity as a point of contact is vital.

A point of contact is a colleague who has volunteered to ensure their direct team – their colleagues – will be updated with RCN news and asks. You can check in with them to see if their area has voted, if they need materials or support, or if there is any other useful information from that part of the workplace. This allows you to grow your team of active members and cover more of the workplace to increase voter turnout and build the foundations for future action.

## 2. ENSURE EVERYONE CAN VOTE: UPDATE YOUR DETAILS

An important early question to put to your colleagues is:



**The RCN will be asking for your vote soon (about pay, to elect new member leaders, on X issue) – are your details up to date?**

To make sure your vote is counted the RCN needs to know your name, job title, workplace and employer.

To make sure you can hear from the RCN you should also update your contact details, including postal address.

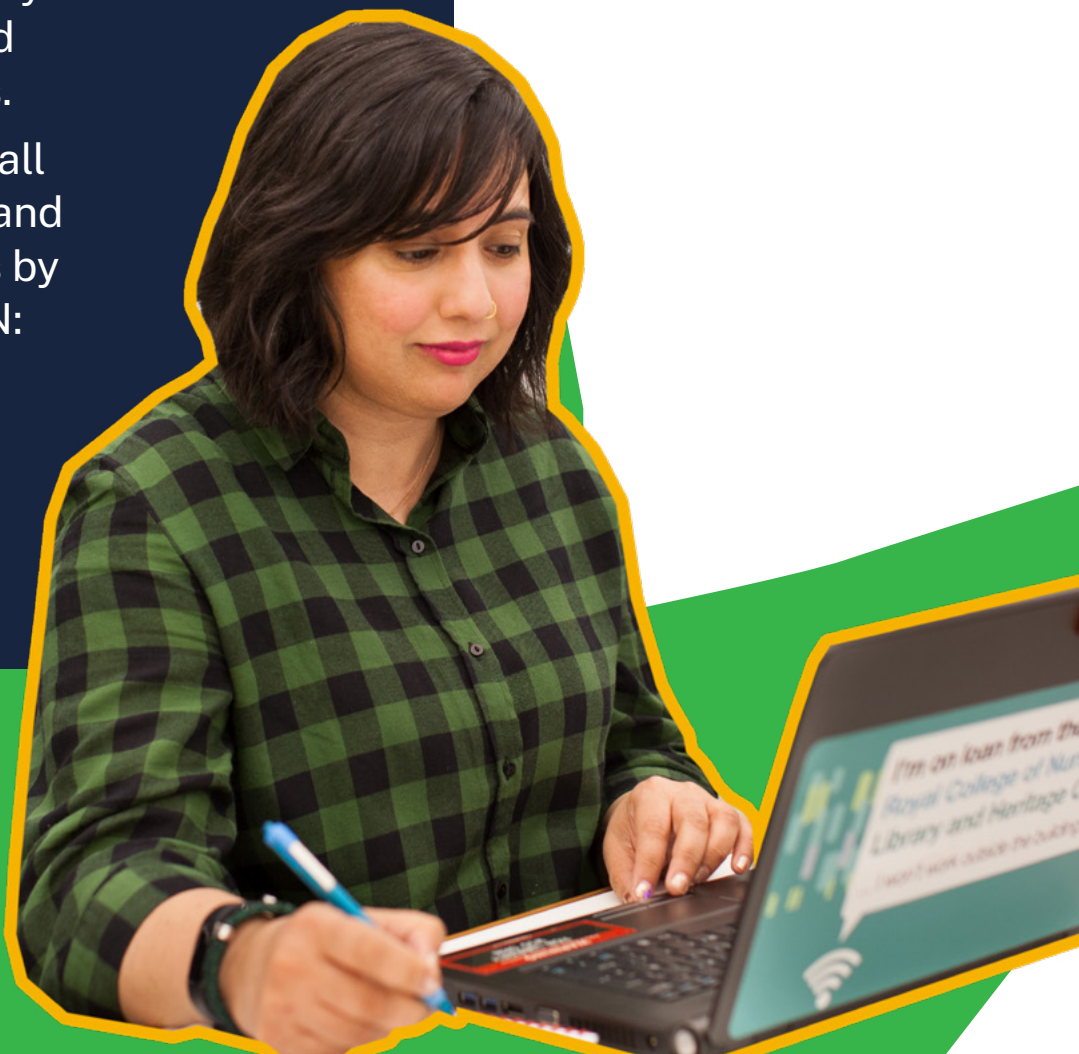
If details are incorrect, you can miss relevant information or the chance to vote at all.

There are often strict rules that organisations like the RCN abide by to protect member data – in some instances, wrong member data has invalidated ballot results. This is why it is so important.

Luckily, it is very easy for members to see and update their details.

You can encourage all members to check and update their details by logging into MyRCN:

**[rcn.org.uk/myrcn](https://rcn.org.uk/myrcn)**



### 3. STAY A STEP AHEAD: GOTV TIMETABLE AND KEY DETAILS

You might not have all these details now but once a consultation or ballot is announced, you'll want to make sure you know the timetable so you know key dates which will frame your GOTV strategy.

#### KEY DETAILS

It is important to understand what you're asking members to take part in. We've already explained the difference between the different types of voting and ballots. As you are prepping to GOTV, you'll need to map out these key details as they will help you to answer questions and support your colleague to vote. A good place to start is on the Have Your Say page on the RCN website.

The questions you may get most are about how members can vote. Details of any current or upcoming votes can be found at: [rcn.org.uk/Get-Involved/Have-your-say](https://rcn.org.uk/Get-Involved/Have-your-say)

#### TIMETABLE

Makes sure you know all the key dates as this will assist you in your planning and tactics. Below are suggestions of what information you might want to know. It is best to have them in order, so you don't miss any deadlines.

No matter what, it's best to vote early. You can encourage your colleagues to do the same. In some digital ballots the RCN may open an issue to vote without announcing a close date.

- Announcements on an issue or change that you'll be asked to vote on
- Any deadline to update member details, this is important for statutory votes
- When voting will start
- Deadline to re-order a paper ballot in statutory votes
- Last day to vote, or deadline to post your ballot back
- Any GOTV events – voting volunteers session; all member events; internationally educated nurses events; Branch meetings supporting GOTV



## 4. BOOST TURNOUT: TACTICS AND CONVERSATIONS

Think about how much you know about your workplace and your colleagues. That knowledge and your relationships are your power, and it's why you and other voting volunteers are the most powerful way to encourage and inspire your colleagues to vote and get the voice of nursing heard.

There are 2 key ways to boost turnout in your workplace:

1. talk to your colleagues
2. get them involved!

### 1. TALK TO YOUR COLLEAGUES

Nothing beats a face-to-face conversation to make the difference and persuade someone to use their voice.

In a vote about your pay, you can open with a question, such as:

**'Have you heard about this year's pay award?  
What do you think, is it enough?'**

**'Have you had chance to vote in the consultation yet?'**

**'The RCN is asking members at our employer to vote,  
have you voted yet?'**

You can be specific to your consultation or ballot too. Information will be available on the RCN website.

Then move onto these steps:

#### HAVEN'T VOTED

Remind them of the key info:

'Do you know how to vote'

'You only have a few days left to vote, so best to do it straight away.'

'Do you need any help or have any questions?'

**If they could not vote immediately, then you'll follow up:**

'Can I check in with you next week to make sure you've been able to vote?'

'Once you've voted, who else can you check in with to see if they voted?'

#### HAVE VOTED

Move them through the asks listed below e.g:

'That's great, who else can you check in with to see if they voted?'

'Would you like to become a voting volunteer?'

**Remember to follow up:**

'Brilliant, I'll check in with you in a few days to see if you were able to encourage your colleagues to vote and if you have any questions?'

'Great, I'll check in with you in a couple days to make sure you've got into the Voting Volunteer Whatsapp Group'

## CONVERSATION TOP TIPS

### 1. Meet members where they are

You know your workplace better than anyone, think about how you get your news, work updates and even workplace gossip. Those are the same places you can have conversations to get out the vote.

Some great options are:

- team meetings
- shift changeovers
- noticeboards
- ward walks
- stalls by the canteen at busy hours
- entrances and by the car parks.

### 2. Reminders make the difference!

Follow up: they allow you to check in with other members and encourage people towards the most important action – voting – but also get them more active in a way that feels manageable. Letting people know you'll check back also gives them a deadline to complete the asks. It will help you build up a picture of where your most active colleagues are.

**3. Group conversations:** breaktimes and meetings Go to break times or any other times where people are together. Leaflets, QR codes and stickers can be useful, but the key to action is conversation. You can use the flow chart for 1-1 conversations as a guide but it's easy to get a group conversation going by asking:

**We're voting on >> insert your issue<<, what do you think?**

Sharing your own thoughts is a very good way to get others talking.

Remember not everyone will automatically understand why voting is important or that their vote matters. It is important to listen to them and their concerns. Your job is to give them hope that by coming together and voting in large numbers we can make sure decision makers are listening to nursing.

Ask them -

**"Would you like to have more money invested in nursing?"**

**If yes: "then you need to vote - either way. It's easy to vote and this is the time to take 5 minutes."**

Use their answers to encourage them to vote and don't forget to let them know you'll be checking back in.

## 2. GET COLLEAGUES INVOLVED

The more members who are active like you, the stronger the voice of nursing. Once a member has taken part in the consultation or ballot, it's crucial you explore with them if they could join you in getting active and persuading others to take part too.

**Once you've encouraged a colleague to become a point of contact to support the GOTV activity, asking members to become a voting volunteer is another way to be active and it couldn't be easier to get your colleagues signed up.**

### Just a quick question! Getting colleagues active:

That's all you need to get colleagues involved and increase the vote in your workplace.

Start small and build up – you never know how many more members you could activate!

Did you know that there is an RCN consultation/ballot happening at the moment?

- Have you voted yet?
- Can you speak to your colleagues? Always ask fellow members if they can speak to a specific number of colleagues to remind them to vote (e.g. 3 members of their team) – this helps get the word out and moves that member towards becoming more active. Check in with them to see if they managed to have those conversations and how they went.
- Will you sign up to be a voting volunteer and help me get out the vote?
- Can you put up posters or distribute leaflets?
- Will you be a ward/team/department point of contact?

Continue to check in with them to see if their area has voted, if they need materials or support, or if they have any other useful information from that part of the workplace. This allows you to grow your team of activists, cover more of the workplace and increase the turnout.



## STAY IN THE LOOP THROUGH THE VOTING VOLUNTEER WHATSAPP

During elections or consultations that stretch beyond your workplace or employer you'll be part of a wider community of active RCN members just like you, working to Get Out The Vote!

You'll be kept up to date through:

- **voting volunteer WhatsApp groups**
- **emails from the RCN.**

It is important you are kept up to date with the latest information. For most consultations If you aren't already in the voting volunteers Whatsapp groups, please check your emails where you should find a link with an invite. Or email [organisinguk@rcn.org.uk](mailto:organisinguk@rcn.org.uk) with your phone number to be added. This is a great way to find other Voting Volunteers so don't let this one slip.

### Remember:

- WhatsApp chats at your workplace can be great places to post reminders and links to vote, tell people when you're going to do a ward walk to answer questions, or find out who's voted already. They can also be good for asking who'd like to help you out.
- Social media is also a valuable resource – post about why you're voting to encourage



## ORDERING MATERIALS

Materials are a useful tool to help get out the vote; they can be used as a conversation starter and a visual reminder to vote. When a consultation or ballot is launched, you will likely be able to download or order materials and access more information.

### Leaflets and flyers

- Good for staff rooms and people can take some away with them to reach members you haven't been able to speak to. Hand them out when you don't have time for a detailed conversation.

### Posters

- Get these up all over the workplace to increase awareness. It is also an accessible way for members to get involved, and a good ask for the points of contacts so the message to vote spreads across the workplace.

### Stickers

- Stickers are a good visual way of reminding members to vote, and a great conversation starter. Keep a stock with you for these conversations and give them out once people have voted. When members see lots of colleagues wearing these, it helps increase confidence in the importance and safety of voting.

# LET'S GET LOUD



