



Council's Report to Members on Congress 2024



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**The International Convention Centre, Newport, south Wales
– home to Congress 2024**



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Foreword

Last year over 3,000 RCN members came together for RCN Congress in Newport to discuss and debate the key issues facing the nursing profession.

Following our unprecedented strike action, members were clear that issues relating to nursing pay and safe staffing were more pressing than ever.

During the week, members considered 29 resolutions and matters for discussion, with topics ranging from virtual wards, AI and genomics, to immigration regulations impacting the nursing workforce.

You spoke with passion and demonstrated your extensive knowledge and experience when considering these motions, all of which were passed.

This report summarises the work that has been undertaken since Congress met last year. Taking each successful item discussed at Congress 2024 in turn, and evaluating the progress made by RCN members and staff working in partnership.

Examples include our research into the experiences of over 3,000 internationally educated nursing staff, the findings of which will be published at Congress 2025 in Liverpool. This work enables us to evidence the harmful impacts of immigration policies on the living standards and family lives of our members.

We have completed a range of work to improve the support we offer to internationally educated nursing staff, including updating our handbook on modern slavery, and gathering evidence through Freedom of Information requests to international recruiting partnerships and the UK Home Office.

Since Congress last year, we have worked closely with members on a number of significant clinical issues. Our work on the Assisted Dying Bill for example, has seen us establish a UK steering group with the Deputy Chief Nurse as Chair. This group will update our position statement on this matter and provide guidance for nursing staff to support them in their practice. We've also updated our position statement on termination of pregnancy to give members greater clarity on their rights and responsibilities in this area.

And work has also been underway to ensure that the voice of UK nursing goes beyond our national borders. We've updated our guidance on humanitarian crises allowing us to make appropriate, ethical and timely responses to global issues impacting global health and the safety and efficacy of health care workers.

As ever, RCN Congress offered the opportunity to showcase the passion and power of the nursing workforce and the remarkable things that are achieved when RCN members come together to demand change.

Carmel O'Boyle
Chair of Council

RCN Congress 2024

The 54th meeting of RCN Congress was held from 2-6 June 2024 in Newport, south Wales.

Present

BJ Waltho (Chair of Congress), Linda Bailey (Vice Chair of Congress), the Agenda Committee, RCN Council, Professional Nursing and Trade Union committees and representatives of the RCN Boards, Branches, RCN UK Forums, the RCN Nursing Support Workers Committee, the RCN UK Stewards, Health and Safety and Learning Representatives' Committees and the RCN Students Committee.

A. Welcome and Introduction from the Chair of Congress

The chair welcomed delegates to Congress.

B. Reports of the Agenda Committee

Congress received reports from the Agenda Committee meetings held since the previous meeting of Congress. During Congress, verbal reports of the Agenda Committee were received.

All resolutions and matters for discussion (including emergency items agreed for inclusion on the Congress agenda) are featured in this report.

C. Resolutions and Matters for Discussion

Resolutions (R), Matters for Discussion (MfD) and Emergency Items (E) are listed in the order they were taken on the agenda.

With the exception of item 11 (Assisted Dying) votes on resolutions were conducted by a show of hands.

When a debate aligns with one of our strategic goals, as outlined in our 5-year plan, *A new dawn for nursing*, it will be indicated as follows:

Goal 1 The RCN as the voice of nursing.

Goal 2 The RCN has an engaged, thriving and diverse membership.

1. **Definition of nursing (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses how the RCN's Definition of Nursing can be utilised to demonstrate the value of nursing.
2. **Should nursing support workers be regulated? (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress asks the RCN to lobby the government on the mandatory regulation of the nursing support workforce.
This resolution was passed.
3. **Are you empowered to speak up? (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to lobby government for more support for nursing staff raising concerns.
This resolution was passed.
4. **Crumbling buildings: the best place for care? (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress demands RCN Council lobby governments and care organisations to take action and maintain their estate appropriately.
5. **The evolution of AI in health care (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the potential barriers and opportunities that artificial intelligence can bring to nursing.
6. **Statutory provision of CPD (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to lobby governments to place a statutory duty on all employers to provide contractual, fully funded continuing professional development (CPD) to deliver safe and effective care.
This resolution was passed.
7. **Nursing apprenticeships (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to lobby government for changes to improve the use of the apprentice levy to ensure it is fit for purpose for nursing and nursing associate programmes.
This resolution was passed.
8. **Support for newly qualified and student nurses (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to declare a crisis in working conditions and quality of support available to students and newly registered nurses.
This resolution was passed.
9. **Immigration regulations for the nursing workforce (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress urges RCN Council to demand the UK Government abolish the new immigration rules for the benefit of the current and future international workforce.
This resolution was passed.
10. **Support for internationally educated nursing staff (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses what needs to be done to support internationally educated nurses and midwives to settle in the UK.
11. **Assisted dying (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress supports the principles of assisted dying.
This resolution was passed.

12. **Access to controlled drugs in care homes (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to lobby government to amend the law to improve access to controlled drugs in care homes.
This resolution was passed.
13. **Redefining learning disability nursing (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses whether the title registered nurse in learning disabilities remains appropriate for contemporary practice.
14. **Digitised patient records: a data security risk? (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the risks involved in the digitalisation of patient records.
15. **Virtual wards: the pros and cons (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the impact of virtual wards on the work, education and development of the nursing workforce and on patients.
16. **Registered nurse substitution (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses what safeguards are required to protect against nurse substitution across all settings.
17. **Patient flow: is it patient-focused? (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress asks Council to demand governments undertake work that improves patient flow, care and safety in all settings
This resolution was passed.
18. **Decriminalising abortion (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress requests that RCN Council support the calls for the decriminalisation of abortion across the UK.
This resolution was passed.
19. **Genomics competencies (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to support the introduction and embedding of genomic competencies within the nursing profession.
This resolution was passed.
20. **Social media and nursing (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of the RCN Congress discusses the advantages and risks of social media for the nursing workforce.
21. **Improved health care for the “unseen” (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to demand the governments to mandate specialist accessible health care for people who experience rough sleeping.
This resolution was passed.
22. **Nursing staff working in social care (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress recognises the value of, and need for, senior nursing leadership within social care across the UK.
This resolution was passed.
23. **Political influencing (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses how we effectively promote the nursing agenda in an election year.

24. **How can we achieve a greener health care system? (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses how health care staff can reduce the carbon footprint of health care.
25. **The value of reps (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the RCN's 'offer' to its trade union representatives.
26. **The future of RCN boards and branches (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the future of boards and branches.
- E27. **Policy for humanitarian crises (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to update and implement a policy for responding to humanitarian crises.
This resolution was passed.
- E28. **Impact of cost improvement programmes (Matter for discussion)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the impact of cost improvement programmes on newly qualified nurse recruitment.
- E29. **Nurse educator workforce (Resolution)**
That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to lobby governments to ensure we have a nursing educator workforce for the future which will protect and invest in the degree route into nursing.
This resolution was passed.



1. Definition of nursing

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Jason Warriner, Public Health Forum
Seconder	N/A
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses how the RCN's *Definition of Nursing* can be utilised to demonstrate the value of nursing.

Key message

We have carefully considered the discussions from Congress and appreciate the positive feedback. This input will be incorporated into future updates of the nursing definition and will guide the development of the broader 'This is Nursing' resources within the RCN Professional Framework Programme. Additionally, efforts are underway to define nursing support roles and the broader workforce.

Agreed scope of the project

This is existing work as part of the PNC mandated Professional Framework Programme.

Activities

We have:

- a Joint Partnership Board for the Professional Framework programme, and they have discussed the Congress debate
- started a new workstream related to defining nursing support work and the workforce. Phase one will include creating definitions and roles. Any further work will be scoped by the Professional Nursing Committee (PNC)
- contributed to a global survey by the International Council of Nursing (ICN) related to the definition of nursing
- used the definition of nursing to help inform many RCN work programmes, for example, Fair Pay for Nursing, Staffing for Safe and Effective Care and Substitution of the Registered Nurse.

We will:

- provide updates to PNC on this work as part of their 2025 workplan.
-

Impact

Valuable member feedback that will shape future updates to the *Definition of Nursing* and contribute to the broader development of the UK Professional Framework, known as 'This is Nursing'.

2. Should nursing support workers be regulated?

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Kevin Morley, Chair, Nursing Support Worker Committee
Seconder	Rachel Hollis, Chair, Professional Nursing Committee
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress asks the RCN to lobby the government on the mandatory regulation of the nursing support workforce.

Key message

We will prepare to capitalise on opportunities in 2025/6 to advocate for government regulation of nursing support workers. Much of the necessary content has already been developed by the nursing department/Nursing Practice Academy, and we will build upon this existing foundation.

Agreed scope of the project

Developing and testing positioning on nursing support worker regulation ahead of likely NMC reform in later 2025.

Activities

We have:

- held meetings with the proposer, seconder and PNC lead
- been working with country colleagues to review existing content and identify any outstanding gaps
- considered how we might engage members in developing positioning on this issue, likely through branch meetings in Spring 2025.

We will:

- develop and test positioning, and work with colleagues in communications and public affairs to plan influencing activity (mid-2025)
- provide a progress update for the joint Nursing Support Worker Committee and Professional Nursing Committee meeting in May 2025.

Impact

Given the fragmented evidence currently available more rigorous, sensitive and extensive research is needed on the regulation and future research also need to look at the detail of the relationship between health professionals and support workers.

3. Are you empowered to speak up?

Goal 1

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Samantha Spence, Chair of the Outer North West London Branch
Seconder	Zeba Arif, Mental Health Forum
Institute alignment	Activism Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to lobby government for more support for nursing staff raising concerns.

Key message

We will support members raising concerns and promote good practice for employers and relevant organisations to respond appropriately to concerns raised.

Agreed scope of the project

1. Support members who raise concerns.
 2. Encourage and promote best practice more widely.
 3. Lobby government to support nursing staff raising concerns.
-



Activities

We have agreed the scope and plan for this work.

1. Support members who raise concerns

We have:

- continued to provide ongoing support to members who experience negative consequences as a result of speaking up, including claims under whistleblowing legislation and victimisation claims under the Equality Act 2010
- started to review the RCN's *Raising Concerns Toolkit*
- held quarterly meetings with the National Guardian's Office, resulting in updated Freedom to Speak Up Guardians for representatives
- hosted an accountability seminar, in October 2024, for 60 RCN Northern Ireland band 6/7 members
- engaged with Northern Ireland politicians and policy makers on the duty of candour and raising concerns.

We will:

- organise events on raising concerns for our members working in the independent sector
- respond to a Department of Health consultation on the Being Open framework in Northern Ireland, addressing issues related to raising concerns and the duty of candour.

2. Encourage and promote best practice more widely

We have:

- held a members engagement event in Wales, in July 2024, followed by a round table of the Colleges and professional bodies (such as the Faculty of Emergency Medicine and the Royal College of Midwives)
- participated in a panel discussion hosted by Northern Ireland's Regulation and Quality Improvement Agency in May 2024, which focused on developing an open, just, and learning culture centred on patient safety.

3. Lobby government to support nursing staff raising concerns

We have:

- submitted evidence to a parliamentary Select Committee inquiry on clinical leadership/patient safety (March 2025).
-

Impact

Improved knowledge of how to raise concerns, the support available and legal protection available. In the long term, a contribution to a culture shift in the way in which concerns are handled by employers.

Left:

Samantha Spence, Chair of the Outer North West London Branch, speaking at Congress

4. Crumbling buildings: the best place for care?

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Mike Travis, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch
Seconder	Mike Hayward, Highland Branch
Institute alignment	Activism Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress demands RCN Council lobby governments and care organisations to take action and maintain their estate appropriately.

Key message

- The RCN recognises that working in poorly maintained buildings are a risk to both patient safety and staff health, safety and wellbeing.
 - Governments must do more to support health and care organisations maintain their estate.
 - Employers have legal duties to maintain their estate in order to protect members and patients.
-

Agreed scope of the project

- Develop an RCN position statement emphasising the importance of well-maintained buildings. This will cross-reference our position statement on asbestos and include statutory compliance requirements related to issues such as legionella and ventilation system maintenance. It will also address future-proofing for new builds.
 - Collect evidence from members and representatives on the impact of poorly maintained buildings.
 - Use the position statement to support advocacy efforts across the UK, including identifying potential external partners.
 - Advocate through the NHS Staff Council for the establishment of a tripartite group to address building safety within the NHS estate, in conjunction with ongoing work on asbestos safety.
 - Create resources for representatives to understand the legal requirements for building maintenance and statutory compliance, along with guidance on escalation procedures.
 - Provide resources to support members who are registered managers or competent persons within the Independent Health and Social Care (IHSC) sector.
 - As part of our membership in the Joint Unions in Prison Alliance (JUPA), review the JUPA Charter and position statement, calling for further investment in the prison estate to meet statutory compliance standards, improve building health and safety infrastructure, and enhance working conditions for members.
-

Activities

We have:

- published a position statement - this has been approved by the Trade Union Committee
- in our role as co-chair of the NHS Staff Council's Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Group (HSWG), written to the Department of Health and Social Care minister requesting the establishment of a tripartite group on building safety (letter sent in December, awaiting a response)
- used our position statement on asbestos management within the health and social care estate to influence activities via the NHS Staff Council's HSWG. This includes an agreement with employers to launch a project focused on asbestos awareness for all NHS staff
- worked with IHSC leads to develop an online resource for members who are registered care home managers (currently in development)
- created a maintenance checklist for RCN health and safety representatives to advocate for local action by employers (currently in development)
- published a webinar on asbestos and RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete), for RCN representatives
- reviewed the Joint Unions in Prison Alliance (JUPA) Charter and position statement, calling on the government to ring-fence funding for investment in the prison estate to meet statutory compliance requirements. The UK Health and Safety Representatives Committee has endorsed the position statement, and the Trade Union Committee has confirmed it. JUPA plans to publish the statement before June 2025 and is organising a parliamentary reception to raise awareness and engage with MPs.

Impact

Improved and safer working environments for members and the patients they care for.

5. The evolution of AI in health care

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Ellen Edwards, Digital Nursing Forum
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the potential barriers and opportunities that artificial intelligence can bring to nursing.

Key message

- AI can support nurses by providing real-time decision support, reducing administrative tasks, optimising workflows, and improving patient outcomes.
 - Nurses play a vital role in data collection for AI and advocating for patients' safety. Embracing AI can enhance nursing practice, improve patient care, and shape the future of health care.
-

Agreed scope of the project

The Congress Delivery Group, comprising members from the Digital Forum Committee and broader members, has collectively resolved to embark on the creation of an RCN Learn resource. This resource will be structured to offer a comprehensive and engaging experience, featuring:

- a clear definition of AI
- varied context(s) to explore its relevance
- an honest examination of the pros and cons
- captivating real-life case studies to illustrate impact
- insightful next steps and future possibilities for innovation and growth.

Together, we are poised to weave a dynamic learning journey that empowers and enlightens nursing in this ever-advancing digital age!

Top, right: Ellen Edwards, member of the Digital Nursing Forum, speaking at Congress,



Activities

We have:

- outlined the scope for delivering this initiative
- conducted a scoping evidence review to support the content of the RCN Learn resource
- convened an expert reference group and held several meetings throughout 2025
- organised a Digital Forum strategy day in January 2025, during which AI was identified as the top priority for the forum
- built a strong case for the recruitment of a UK Nursing Information Officer at the RCN, who will strategically lead the digital and informatics nursing agenda.

We will:

- gather and finalise the information outlined in the project scope, with plans to publish guidance on the RCN Learn platform in early summer
- recruit a UK Nursing Information Officer and establish a digital strategy for nursing
- develop a position statement on the use of AI in health care, ensuring it supports AI implementation, addresses professional accountability and considers nurses' concerns
- align this work with broader RCN policies and guidance, including *RCN Nursing Workforce Standards* and the Professional Framework.

Impact

Knowledge and information sharing initially. The broader impact is to be determined.

Richard Jones, Chair of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Branch, speaking at Congress 2024



6. Statutory provision of CPD

Goal 1

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Richard Jones, Chair of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Branch
Seconder	Ally Middleton, Education
Institute alignment	Nursing Workforce Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to lobby governments to place a statutory duty on all employers to provide contractual, fully funded continuing professional development (CPD) to deliver safe and effective care.

Key message

We will lobby the 4 governments of the UK and engage with employers to secure contractual, fully funded continuing professional development (CPD) for all health care workers, ensuring the delivery of safe and effective care across all settings.

Agreed scope of the project

To bring together a UK-wide working group to work together to provide a resource document and guidance for RCN staff and activist members to lobby for the provision of contractual, fully funded CPD.

This resolution has the support of RCN staff across the UK, forming a diverse working group with expertise in lobbying at government, local, and regional levels on employment and pay issues.

The focus of this resolution will be on providing the necessary information and guidance for lobbying and negotiating the provision of contractual, fully funded CPD, rather than campaigning for a statutory duty.

Activities

We have:

- recruited a UK-wide membership for the working group
- agreed on the scope and plan for delivering this item
- held meetings with key stakeholders
- discussed ongoing work across the College in this area throughout the UK.

We will:

- develop a resource document outlining key drivers for addressing the issue. This will be uploaded to the RCN website by summer 2025
- create guidance for RCN staff to support lobbying government and negotiating with local and regional health and social care employers. This guidance will be uploaded to the RCN website by summer 2025.

Impact

RCN staff and members will have access to the information and resources needed for effective negotiations on CPD and lifelong learning for the nursing workforce, impacting on funding and improved access to CPD opportunities.

7. Nursing apprenticeships

Goal 1

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Fiona Holley, Chair of the Learning Representatives' Committee
Seconder	Dennis Greer, Trade Union Committee
Institute alignment	Activism Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to lobby government for changes to improve the use of the apprentice levy to ensure it is fit for purpose for nursing and nursing associate programmes.

Key message

At the core of building a sustainable and well-supported nursing workforce is the creation of accessible and effective education pathways. We are dedicated to ensuring that nursing apprenticeships and nursing associate programmes are inclusive and beneficial for all.

RCN Congress has called on RCN Council to lobby the government for vital changes to the apprentice levy. This initiative aligns with our strategic goals of amplifying the RCN as the voice of nursing and fostering an engaged, thriving, and diverse membership.

Together, we can advocate for the policies and resources needed to strengthen the future of nursing.



Above: Fiona Holley, Chair of the Learning Representatives' Committee, speaking at Congress

Agreed scope of the project

1. Engagement with the NHS Staff Council (non-pay) task and finish group.
 2. Amendment to the NHS Handbook.
 3. Reforming the Apprenticeship Levy.
 4. Level 7 apprenticeship funding (proposals to remove funding).
 5. Raising awareness.
 6. NHS engagement.
-

Activities

Various activities, including lobbying, have already taken place and will continue as part of ongoing work in this area. Below is an overview of the activities and actions taking place to deliver this resolution:

We have:

- met with, and will have further meetings with, the proposer and the Trade Union Committee leads
 - agreed on the scope and work plan for delivering this resolution with the proposer. The key components are as follows:
 - engagement with the NHS Staff Council (non-pay) task and finish group – we are collaborating to reduce agency spend and ensure that apprenticeship funding aligns with workforce needs by making full and effective use of a reformed apprenticeship levy
 - amendment to the NHS Handbook – we will support changes to the *NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook* to ensure that nursing staff participating in apprenticeships do not experience detriment to their basic pay, benefits, or career progression
 - reforming the Apprenticeship Levy – we are advocating for reforms to address the underutilisation of the levy and ensure it effectively supports nursing and nursing associate programmes. We will also emphasise the need to extend the scope of levy funding to cover backfill, ensuring employers utilise unspent Apprenticeship Levy funds (£418m in financial year 2022/23)
 - level 7 apprenticeship funding – we will campaign to retain level 7 funding for nursing specialist qualifications, protecting vital nursing roles such as district nursing, health visiting, school nursing, general practice nursing, as well as other specialist and leadership roles
 - raising awareness – we will utilise resources like the NHS Employers *Introduction to Apprenticeships* to inform members, managers, and policymakers about the benefits and challenges of nursing apprenticeships
 - NHS engagement across the UK – we will engage with the relevant NHS Social Partnership Forum and negotiating bodies in each of the 4 UK countries to ensure the apprenticeship programme reflects the needs of people, organisations, systems, and populations.
-

Impact

This project aims to establish a fairer, more supportive system for nursing apprenticeships, ultimately strengthening the nursing workforce for the future.

8. Support for newly registered and student nurses

Goal 1

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Emmanuel Edun, member of the Education Forum and Emergency Care Forum, Eastern region
Seconder	Natasha Green, member of the RCN Students' Committee
Institute alignment	Nursing Workforce Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to declare a crisis in working conditions and quality of support available to students and newly registered nurses.

Key message

We recognise the unique challenges facing student and newly registered nurse members and we are committed to developing support and engagement opportunities with these groups. We will work collaboratively with members to ensure that support available, is accessible and meets the needs of these groups.

Agreed scope of the project

This resolution aligns with ongoing work already being undertaken by the RCN. There will be no new projects started, but awareness of related work will be raised, specifically among student and newly registered nurse members.

This work includes:

- increased awareness and implementation of the Nursing Workforce Standards among student and NRN members
- encouraging student and NRN members to access the RCN Learn platform to support them during the transition from student to registrant and beyond
- increasing awareness of the NHSE Preceptorship Framework
- highlighting ongoing work between the RCN and DHSC on the progression from AfC Band 5 to Band 6
- raising the profile and associated opportunities available with the NRN network and developing this to provide a community space for professional networking and peer support
- developing opportunities for students to engage in activism activity to support confidence, leadership and engagement.
- increasing the number of opportunities to engage with student and NRN members through face to face and virtual events.

The Students' Committee will be working with the RCN Welfare team in 2025 to highlight financial challenges of nurse education, and support policy and influence work.

Right: Emmanuel Edun, member of the Education Forum, speaking at Congress

Activities

We have:

- agreed on the scope and plan for the resolution
- after meeting with the proposer in September 2024, clarified the resolution's rationale and their expectations
- addressed the resolution at the September 2024 Students' Committee meeting
- held the first group meeting in October 2024, with the proposer and student committee lead as members
- commissioned Research by Design to conduct qualitative research that will support both student and NRN initiatives, providing evidence of the specific support challenges faced by these groups
- established 2 working groups within the Students' Committee: Student Finance and Nursing Workforce Standards, which aim to highlight and address some of the key challenges faced by students and NRNs, raising the profile of these issues within the wider work.

We will:

- use the research to validate the College's ongoing work and also identify further areas for work in both the Student and NRN (newly registered nurse) membership categories.

Impact

Student and NRN members will be empowered to advocate for their needs both during placements and in the workplace, using tools such as the *Nursing Workforce Standards* and *Preceptorship Framework* to guide these conversations. Through their RCN membership, students and NRNs will have access to events and activities tailored to their stage in the nursing journey, offering valuable support and opportunities for engagement.



9. Immigration regulations for the nursing workforce

Goal 1

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Charlotte Collings, forum member, Critical Care and Flight Nursing Forum, Essex Branch
Seconder	Professor Judith Ellis, Vice Chair of the International Committee
Institute alignment	International Nursing Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress urges RCN Council to demand the UK Government abolish the new immigration rules for the benefit of the current and future international workforce.

Key message

Although internationally recruited staff play a crucial role in supporting the health and care sector, current immigration policies continue to create barriers by separating families and making the UK a less appealing destination for living and working. The UK immigration system must recognise and honour the significant contributions of internationally educated nursing professionals, ensuring they are not separated from their loved ones.

Agreed scope of the project

In 2023, the previous Government introduced a series of changes to immigration policy, set to take effect between October 2023 and April 2024. These changes included increases in visa application and settlement fees, rising by 15-20%. Additionally, starting on 11 March 2024, care workers will no longer be eligible to bring dependent family members with them to the UK.

RCN members are also impacted by the substantial evidence required to prove sole parental responsibility in order to bring dependent family members to the UK. Furthermore, the “No Recourse to Public Funds” (NRPF) visa condition restricts internationally educated nurses on skilled worker visas (including the Health and Care Worker visa) from accessing public benefits, putting the financial security of members and their families at risk.

In October 2024, RCN staff met with the proposer to share details of ongoing research into the experiences of international nursing staff and students. The research, which includes a survey of 3,000 internationally educated nurses and interviews with 25 selected participants, will continue to gather evidence on the harmful effects of immigration policies on living standards and family reunification. The findings will be integrated into the RCN's workplans for 2025, inform the development of updated policy positions, and provide a foundation for an external publication aimed at influencing government policy.

Activities

We have:

- published *Without a Safety Net* (August 2024), a report that examined the harm caused by the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) visa condition. This has generated significant interest from key stakeholders
- responded to a consultation from the Director of Labour Market Enforcement, raising concerns about the connection between the immigration system and the exploitation of internationally recruited staff in the care sector (December 2024)
- briefed MPs attending a Westminster Hall debate in January 2025 on the current visa sponsorship system, highlighting how the immigration system contributes to the exploitation of care workers
- submitted a series of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to the Home Office to better understand the number of nurses currently subject to immigration control, as well as decisions related to family reunification and access to public funds
- conducted a member survey between September and October 2024, and interviews were held from November 2024 to January 2025, gathering insights on the experiences of international nursing staff and student members
- begun drafting an external policy publication aimed at influencing the UK government, based on the survey findings, interviews with members, and other relevant evidence
- met with the proposer and the Committee lead to provide an update on the progress made with this item and to confirm their satisfaction with the proposed actions (February 2025)
- been monitoring the passing of the Border Security, Asylum, and Immigration Bill, providing relevant briefings as necessary.

We will:

- publish a report during Congress on the experiences of international nursing staff arriving in the UK, with a focus on their interactions with the immigration system.
- explore further opportunities for collaboration with external stakeholders on immigration-related issues.

Impact

The insights from the RCN ‘Experience of International Nursing Staff and Students’ survey will inform the RCN’s 2025 workplans.

Early findings have shaped updated immigration policies approved by the Professional Nursing Committee (February 2025), including capping visa fees, immediate eligibility for indefinite leave, and removal of the ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ condition.

The RCN will continue challenging this condition and working with stakeholders like unions, NHS Employers, and MPs to influence immigration policies.

Ongoing media engagement will highlight the impact of these policies on nurses and their families, ensuring continued attention on these critical issues.

10. Support for internationally educated nursing (IEN) staff

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Grace Chukwurah, Dorset Branch,
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	n/a
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses what needs to be done to support internationally educated nurses and midwives to settle in the UK.

Key message

We will show the support that the RCN provides to its IEN membership.

Agreed scope of the project

The work is split into 4 workstreams:

1. Legislative and policy changes.
2. Employer accountability and ending exploitation.
3. Member recruitment, engagement and activism.
4. Professional issues.

Additional working groups will span these workstreams. These include data (including intelligence gathering across regions and countries), strategic communications, and the production and review of IEN resources.

Objectives

- Coordinate and oversight of all related IEN activity for the College.
 - Ensure all activity is linked to RCN strategic aim and operational plans.
 - Develop and monitor and maintain overall workplan.
 - Report on IEN work across the RCN.
 - Ensure member engagement with any outputs.
 - Assess the need and value of all related work and ensure that it is in line with RCN strategic aims.
-

Workstream objectives for the project:

Legislative/policy changes

- Ensure that existing labour laws are strictly enforced to protect migrant workers from exploitation including proper wage payments, reasonable working hours, and safe working conditions.
- Advocate for new policies that address the unique vulnerabilities of migrant workers in the care sector. Better working conditions, fair wages, legal protections.
- Single enforcement body – work towards a regulated body being able to enforce and prosecute.
- Build a case to remove ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ for those on health and social care visas.

Employer accountability

- Promote transparency and accountability among employers in the care sector regarding their treatment of migrant workers.
- Ethical recruitment practices.

Empowerment/support and recruit into membership

- Provide education and training to RCN staff, reps, members and migrant workers about their rights and how to advocate for themselves in exploitative situations.
- Empower members to source work via ethical recruitment practices/pathways.
- Establish a comprehensive support network for internationally recruited health care workers and migrants.
- Ensure migrant workers have access to support services including legal aid, health care, housing etc.
- Improve visa regulations
 - Lobby for reforms on visa regulations to prevent employers from using immigration status to exploit workers.
 - Increase awareness,
 - Raise public awareness of exploitation.
 - Gain public support and put pressure on policy makers.
 - Raise profile of RCN services and encourage IENs to join the RCN.
- Outreach to potential migrant workers
 - Create resources aimed at providing information to internationally educated workers before they come to the UK. Materials to provide information on – pathways for migrant workers to gain permanent residency, accommodation (including realistic pricing and process of letting/buying), leaving an employer and impact on visa status, IELTS, OET and OSCE exams, NMC/revalidation, trade union/ good employment practices etc.

Activities

We have:

- updated the RCN's handbook on modern slavery in collaboration with the Anti-Slavery Commissioner. This updated version is now available at rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/Modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking
- submitted a freedom of information (FOI) request to all participating local authorities regarding international recruitment partnerships. The responses will be analysed to guide future work
- submitted an FOI request to the Home Office seeking visa data relating to family visas, individuals with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), and protected characteristics, to inform ongoing policy and support work
- conducted a comprehensive survey of internationally educated nurses (IENs), covering the full journey from the decision to relocate to the UK through to citizenship application. A report is currently in preparation and will help target future initiatives. Prepared and disseminated a policy briefing for MPs ahead of the Westminster Hall debate on the Certificate of Common Sponsorship (22 January 2025)
- hosted our first dedicated conference in Wales (November 2024), with a follow-up planned for Spring 2025
- continued to manage and maintain IEN-focused marketing and advisory content on the RCN website, with a focus on accessibility and promotion of resources to members. For example:
 - delivered webinars in December 2024 on key employment topics such as statutory leave and pay. Recordings will be uploaded to the RCN website
 - initiated a review schedule of relevant content to identify and address gaps
- continued to collect data and intelligence through RCN members, the international committee, and wider organisational channels. This activity will continue through to the end of 2025
- provided training and resources for staff responding to IEN-specific queries and casework:
 - conducted twice-yearly recorded webinars, with content shaped by staff needs.
- begun development of an exploitation resource (modelled on Ask Listen Act), including training for reps, regional officers (ROs), and senior regional officers (SROs) on identifying and escalating exploitation cases:
 - a draft questionnaire was circulated in January 2025
 - a key objective is to clarify the distinction between exploitation and modern slavery
 - we are considering the creation of a member advice guide to help recognise signs of exploitation among colleagues
 - continued to monitor government activity and potential legislative changes related to NRPF. New guidance was published in December 2024.
rcn.org.uk/membership/Existing-members/International-nursing-members

We will:

- hold focus groups with Filipino nurses – both those currently in the UK and those planning to migrate – to identify and address information gaps
- develop a plan to establish an equalities organising structure, led by the Employment Relations Department and the Activist Academy
- review and enhance the role of accredited representatives in addressing equality issues in the workplace. This includes training for reps and activists to better recognise and support IEN concerns
- compile data on IENs accessing the hardship fund and the specific challenges they are facing
- as part of the wider review of RCN branches, assess opportunities to improve the representation of IENs at the branch level.

Impact

Much of the activities have already starting showing positive impact:

- **an increase in IEN membership,**
- **a successful lobbying on immigration issues such as No Resource to Public Funds**
- **changes to current sponsorship visa model.**



Above: Grace Chukwurah, Dorset Branch, speaking at Congress



Charlotte Collings, Essex Branch, speaking at Congress

11. Assisted dying

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Carmel O'Boyle, Chair Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch
Seconder	Charlotte Collings, voting member Essex Branch
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress supports the principles of assisted dying.

Key message

To develop guidance for members to promote consistent advice for responding compassionately and to develop guidance through the new groups.

Agreed scope of the project

It has been agreed that new groups will be set up to progress this work. The proposer and committee member will be included in the new groups.

Activities

We have:

- after review agreed the RCN current neutral position will not change but identified the current position needs updating to reflect emerging legislation across a number of UK jurisdictions
- agreed this work will form part of the core work of the Nursing Practice Academy
- established a UK Steering Group, with the RCN's Deputy Chief Nurse as chair (the working group) and met twice since Congress 2024
- established an expert reference group (to cover the 4 UK countries and the Crown Dependencies) to consider legislative changes on assisted dying
- published an RCN Magazine article on 30 January 2025) and have plans for further communications
- updated our position statement, which is due to be finalised in June 2025.

We will:

- finalise the terms of reference of this work by the end of February 2025 and incorporate into the Nursing Practice Academy programme
- provide guidance for our membership to support them in their practice that reflects the specifics of relevant national legislation.

Impact

To develop guidance to support members in this area. We have agreed that the neutral position of the College will not change.

12. Access to controlled drugs in care homes

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Sandra Campbell, member of the Pain and Palliative Forum
Seconder	Stephanie Craig, Chair of the Older Persons Forum
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to lobby government to amend the law to improve access to controlled drugs in care homes.

Key message

Terminally ill individuals nearing the end of life often require injectable medications to manage distressing symptoms. These medications, classified as 'controlled drugs,' are subject to specific legal controls and regulations. In care home settings (including nursing homes and residential care homes with nursing provision), access to these drugs can be inconsistent due to prescribing restrictions, which affects the quality of end-of-life care provided.

In the UK, approximately 16,700 care home residents are in their final year of life. Prescribing and storing controlled drugs for individual residents can be time-consuming, impractical, and wasteful.

In 2021, there were 278,946 care home residents in England and Wales, with 126,488 and 5,475 registered deaths of care home residents, respectively. More recent figures from Scotland estimate 30,129 care home residents, while Northern Ireland had approximately 11,000. In both countries, about 20% of all deaths during the research period occurred in those registered at a care home address.

To improve end-of-life care, it is essential to address the issue of access to controlled drugs in care homes. Given the data, legislative changes are needed to ensure that patients in care homes can access these critical medications.

Agreed scope of the project

The agreed scope of the project involves collaborating with Marie Curie and other external stakeholders to amplify the RCN's support for this issue. The coalition will focus on lobbying for legal changes to improve access to controlled drugs in care homes and will engage in activities that complement the coalition's efforts. This includes laying parliamentary questions and directly raising the issue with politicians.

The coalition group consists of key organisations such as the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, the RCN, the University of Cambridge, and Cardiff University, alongside representatives from primary care, social care, and the voluntary care sector. This collaborative approach aims to bring about meaningful change in end-of-life care for individuals in care home settings.

Activities

We have:

- agreed the scope and action plan
- held 2 meetings with the proposer, seconder, committee lead, and 4-country RCN representatives to discuss the outputs of the coalition group and RCN involvement
- developed a survey to explore current practices, challenges, and opportunities related to accessing controlled drugs (CDs) for palliative care and end-of-life care in care homes across the UK. The survey aims to gather insights on the impact of restricted access to CDs in providing adequate end-of-life care
- collated, and are reviewing comments on the draft survey and is being finalised before it is shared with RCN members
- published the survey results through the University of Cambridge, with the RCN sharing them with members
- used the survey outcomes to support lobbying efforts for government change.

We will:

- provide comments and feedback on the survey from relevant colleagues in the 4 countries before finalising
- share the survey results with members through 4 UK independent health and social care (IHSC) leads and relevant forums/networks
- collaborate with the coalition group to lobby the government for change.
- hold regular meetings with the project group to align on the work and outcomes from the coalition group meetings.

Impact

The following may evolve based on further discussions and outputs from the coalition group.

The survey aims to identify current practices, challenges, and opportunities related to accessing controlled drugs for end-of-life care. The long-term goals of lobbying the government are to:

- **reduce variations in access to controlled drugs across the UK in the provision of end-of-life care**
- **promote timely access to medication, thereby reducing anxiety among nursing staff about obtaining necessary drugs when required**
- **encourage the cost-effective and safe use of controlled drugs in care homes, minimising the risk of errors.**

13. Redefining learning disability nursing

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Katy Welsh, Chair of the Learning Disability Nursing Forum
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses whether the title registered nurse in learning disabilities remains appropriate for contemporary practice.

Key message

We are deeply concerned about the future of learning disability nursing. Since 2016, the number of student learning disability nurses has steadily declined, with a 36% drop over the past 5 years. This trend has led some universities to discontinue the training. Additionally, there has been a 45% decrease in the number of registered nurses in learning disabilities employed by the NHS in England since 2009.

A key factor driving this decline is the evolving service provision for individuals with learning disabilities, which has impacted the professional identity of registered nurses in learning disabilities.

To address this issue, we are actively working to enhance the clarity of the professional identity for registered nurses in learning disabilities .

Agreed scope of the project

As this was a matter for discussion, there are no specific actions from Congress relating to this and it is to be addressed in our usual business.



Activities

We have:

- engaged with the proposer for this item and shared the plan
- collaborated with the RCN media team to raise mainstream media awareness of the learning disability nursing workforce crisis
- held a Learning Disability Nursing Workforce Summit in November 2024, bringing together key stakeholders to support the development of a UK-wide vision for this field of nursing. The summit concluded with a world café-style workshop focused on actions to improve:
 - the identity and recognition of Registered Nurses in Learning Disabilities (RNLDs)
 - recruitment of students and support for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering learning disability studies
 - career pathways and progression opportunities for RNLDs
 - understanding the current workforce and planning for the workforce of the future.
- secured an agenda item at Congress 2025, which will cover workforce modelling for registered nurses in learning disabilities.

We will:

- promote conversations about learning disability nursing through blogs and webinars, discussing titles, skillsets, workplace roles, led by the RCN Learning Disability Nursing Forum
- undertake a detailed review of the learning disability nursing workforce
- explore the RCN's role in marketing and promoting this profession
- highlight the impact of insufficient funding for nursing studies in England as part of the RCN's broader advocacy for nursing education
- build upon the work of the Professional Framework for Nursing, ensuring that learning disability nursing is prominently featured to describe career opportunities and development pathways.

Impact

The RCN Learning Disability Nursing Workforce Summit, held on 22 November 2024, brought together nearly 100 key stakeholders from across the UK. The event highlighted pressing issues within learning disability nursing, including the absence of first-year learning disability nursing students in the south east and the ongoing decline in student numbers, RNLDs employed by the NHS, and RNLDs on the NMC register.

Attendees were provided with updates on findings from surveys conducted with RNLDs, HEIs, and students, as well as research commissioned by the RCN Foundation on the economic benefits of RNLDs and their role in addressing health inequalities.

A thematic analysis of the summit discussions is currently underway, and a post-summit report is being compiled. The next steps will focus on how to build on these insights and continue to drive improvements in the learning disability nursing workforce.

Left: Katy Welsh, Chair of the Learning Disability Nursing Forum, speaking at Congress

14. Digitalised patient records: a data security risk?

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Stephen Shouler, member of the UK Stewards' Committee
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	n/a
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the risks involved in the digitalisation of patient records.

Activities

RCN Council agreed no further action was required for this item

15. Virtual wards: the pros and cons

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Ellen Nicholson, forum member, General Practice Nursing Forum
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	n/a
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the impact of virtual wards on the work, education and development of the nursing workforce and on patients.

Activities

RCN Council agreed no further action was required for this item

16. Registered nurse substitution

Goal 1

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Samantha Spence, Chair of the Outer North West London Branch
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	Nursing Workforce Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses what safeguards are required to protect against nurse substitution across all settings

Key message

The role of the registered nurse (RN) is safety critical and must not be substituted by either the nursing support workforce or other health care professionals in any health and care setting. The evidence is clear, a registered nurse is needed to maintain patient safety, improved outcomes and satisfaction.

Agreed scope of the project

Safeguards to prevent registered nurse substitution:

1. Education

There is a need to ensure that members, patients, health and care workers, governments, commissioners, providers, regulators and the public truly understand the value of RNs in maintaining the safety, health, and wellbeing of our population. Nursing is the largest safety critical profession in health care.

2. Clear definitions and standardisation

The publication of the Levels of Nursing defines the levels of nursing beyond the point of registration: Enhanced, Advanced and Consultant. These defined standards will further help give clarity and consistency in understanding the roles, skills, competencies of RNs in all the 4 pillars (clinical, education, research and leadership) of nursing.

3. Strong, visible nursing leadership

Strong, visible nursing leadership, role models and demonstrates the expected values of the nursing profession and NMC Code to safeguards patients and service users. Nurse leaders should have access to latest evidence to advice their boards/ senior management teams within health and social care settings.

4. Staffing for safe and effective care (SSEC)

Ensure that organisational nursing workforce planning is based on service needs reflecting the needs and preferences of the diverse populations they serve.

Having enough nursing staff with the right skills, in the right place at the right time is essential.

5. Reporting

- Whenever RN substitution occurs, it must be reported using internal reporting systems within organisations. This will promote a culture that RN substitution is not an acceptable practice. If occurrences are not monitored, then it is difficult to learn lessons, capture trends and impact. Hence, no meaningful improvements are made.

6. Legal safeguards

- All members of the nursing workforce must always appropriately introduce themselves when dealing with patients and service users, their relatives, carers and the public at large.
-

Activities

We have:

- agreed a plan and scope with the proposer (see details above)
- delivered the Enhanced, Advanced, and Consultant Levels of Nursing in May 2024
- defined the Nursing Support Worker role and clarified definitions of practice.

We will:

- review and update the RCN's position statement on registered nurse substitution – this will be in place after Congress 2025
 - review and update the RCN *Nursing Workforce Standards* to strengthen the scope of practice, registered nurse substitution, and skill mix. In Standard 9, we have included stronger guidance on safe staff redeployment, as the scope of practice may vary and impact patient safety. This offers guidance on ensuring that individuals practice within their scope of practice. In Standard 10, we have highlighted the risks associated with registered nurse substitution and strengthened the scope of practice to ensure safe and effective care across both NHS and independent health and social care sectors
 - continue to support and educate all members to work within their scope of practice in line with the *NMC Code*
 - continue to review and respond to changes in practices and policies
 - continue to champion and support the Protect Nurse Campaign
 - continue to showcase the value of nursing support work in advancing nursing and ensuring the care and support of patients and service users
 - continue to collaborate with nurse leaders to support, and where necessary, challenge, the practices of registered nurse substitution within organisations. This will be done using clear and transparent data on nursing workforce skill mix. Any changes to skill mix in organisations must be discussed with members and their representatives, accompanied by a rationale, documented, and made easily accessible and transparent.
-

Impact

While it is still early in the process, a key focus of this work will be to strengthen and embed our position on substitution. Additionally, have updated the *Nursing Workforce Standards* to support all our members in practicing within their scope of practice, ensuring they raise concerns when care is compromised, to ultimately protect patients and service users.

17. Patient flow: is it patient focused?

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Lucy Hayes, South Birmingham Branch member
Seconder	Ashleigh Taylor, Greater Bristol Branch
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress asks Council to demand governments undertake work that improves patient flow, care and safety in all settings.

Key message

The role of the registered nurse (RN) is safety critical and must not be substituted by either the nursing support workforce or other health care professionals in any health and care setting. The evidence is clear, a registered nurse is needed to maintain patient safety, improved outcomes and satisfaction.

Agreed scope of the project

There is an overlap with the corridor care workstream in the Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC) Programme and a gap analysis will be completed to determine any additional activity required. This may vary across the 4 countries of the UK. This work will now be incorporated into the wider corridor care workstream. See activities below

Activities

We have:

- met with proposers and members (October 2024)
- engaged with the UK Health and Social Care Secretary, as well as representatives from devolved nations, to discuss our manifesto. This included a clear call to end corridor care
- met again with members (April 2025) and reviewed this work, which overlaps with corridor care. We have agreed that this work will be incorporated within the corridor care work stream.

We will:

- use the UK Government's upcoming consultation on its 10-year NHS plan as a key opportunity to continue lobbying for meaningful change.

Impact

NHSE have sent a letter to provider organisations and are piloting reporting corridor care this winter.

18. Decriminalising abortion

Goal 1

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Michael Nevill, forum member, Women's Health Forum
Secunder	Louise Hyett-Collins, Vice Chair, RCN Students' Committee
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress requests that RCN Council support the calls for the decriminalisation of abortion across the UK.

Key message

- We believe that all women must be able to continue to access safe and effective abortion care and be able to decide for themselves about their own pregnancy.
 - We believe that abortion should be governed by regulatory and professional health care standards rather than criminal law (legislation) and supports calls for the decriminalisation of abortion in England, Wales and Scotland.
 - We also support the rights of health care workers to conscientiously object to providing direct abortion care, except in an emergency.
-

Agreed scope of the project

Develop a robust and progressive RCN position statement in support of the decriminalisation of abortion.

Consider and initiate RCN engagement in national campaign efforts on this issue. To include collaboration between the RCN's Communications Team and the professional lead, with ongoing work to determine the most effective approach to parliamentary engagement. This will be coordinated through the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), who are leading the legislative reform campaign.

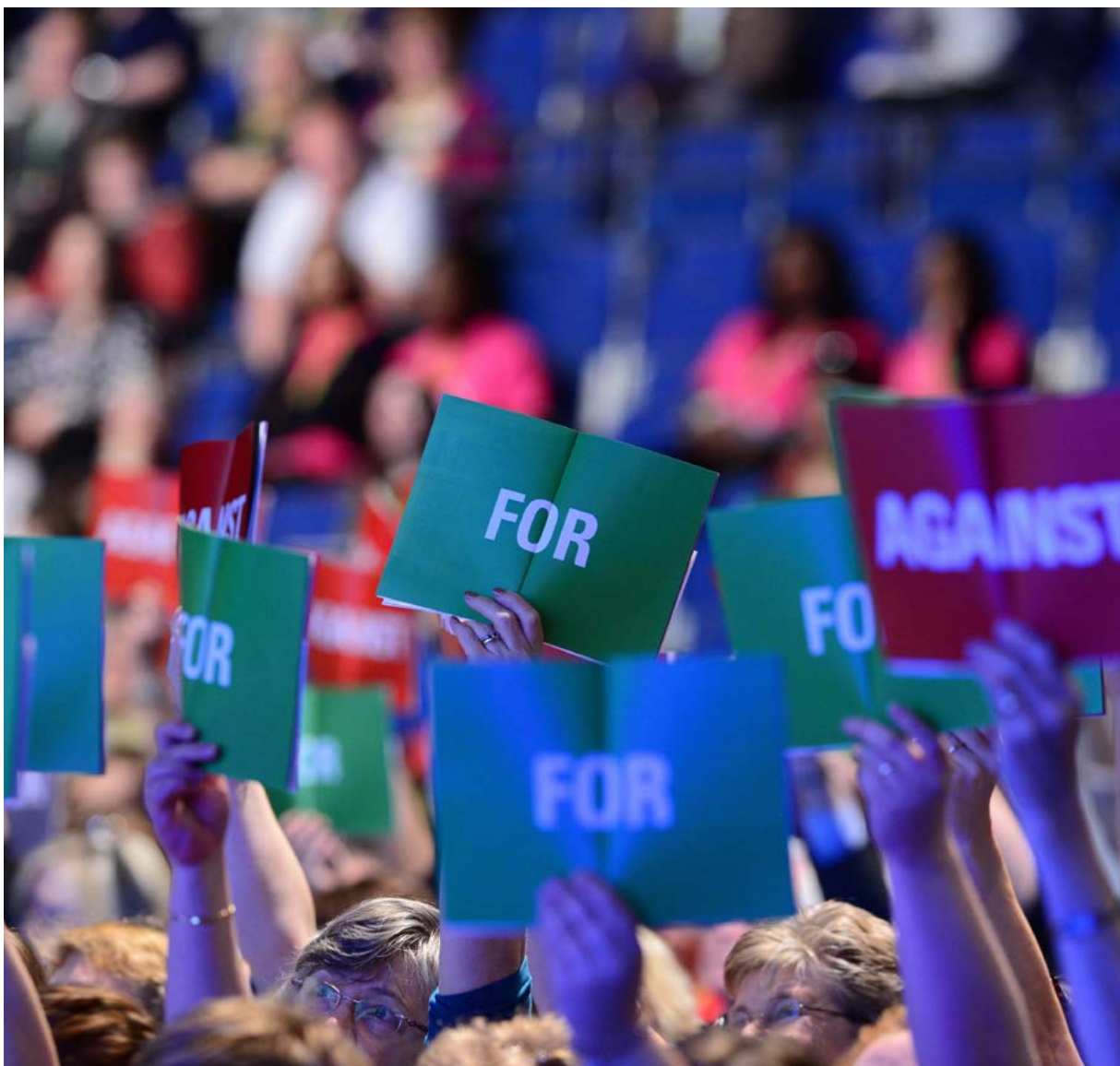
Activities

We have:

- launched the RCN's updated position statement (December 2024)
 - continued RCN engagement with the national campaign.
-

Impact

1. **The RCN will have clarity around its position on the national debate on decriminalisation of abortion.**
2. **Having a clear statement will support better understanding of the issues.**
3. **It will also enable members and staff to actively engage in national campaign to change the legislation around abortion care.**



19. Genomics competencies

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Joel Gould, Chair of Greater Bristol Branch. Tracie Miles, Greater Bristol Branch, has replaced the proposer on the working group.
Seconder	Jade Hunt, Plymouth Branch
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to support the introduction and embedding of genomic competencies within the nursing profession.

Key message

- Genomics is/will be a part of every nurse's role to a greater or lesser extent. Each nurse will need to become genomic competent/aware.

Agreed scope of the project

- To embed and promote a core genomic competency framework into the nursing workforce.
- The competency framework is intended to be RCN-endorsed.
- Core competencies will be aligned with the existing genomic framework published on the NHSE website to minimise duplication and reduce confusion across the profession.

The working group – comprising stakeholders including NHSE – has met on several occasions. Through these discussions, it has become clear that 2 distinct sets of competencies currently exist. One has been developed by RCN members who proposed the Congress item. The other published by NHSE (originally developed by Health Education England) and currently promoted through the Genomics Education Programme.

In light of this, the staff lead has invited both parties to collaborate on a unified approach. This may involve either combining or complementing the existing frameworks to support a consistent and coherent implementation across the nursing profession. A joint meeting was initially scheduled for early March but has been postponed at NHSE's request.

It is important to note that this RCN Congress item and the remit of the working group is to embed and promote a core genomics framework into the nursing workforce. The remit is not to develop a new competency framework. Progress is therefore on hold until consensus is reached on which framework is to be embedded. Aligning efforts is critical to preserving effective working relationships with NHSE and preventing confusion among the UK nursing workforce due to the presence of 2 separate genomic competency frameworks.

Additionally, the group has agreed that the primary focus should be on genomic novices across the RCN's defined 'levels of practice,' rather than attempting to cater to varying levels of existing genomic expertise among specialist genomic nurses.

Activities

We have:

- agreed the scope and plan of the project
- held the first meeting in October 2024, where initial objectives were outlined
- identified a replacement proposer, with a follow-up meeting held in early November
- held 3 additional meetings to progress the work
- secured representation from across the UK
- engaged genomics experts to inform and guide the project
- reviewed existing genomic competency frameworks
- developed a Project Initiation Document (PID), pending final input from NHSE
- submitted a proposal for a Congress 2025 learning event.

We will:

- strengthen the genomic framework across all levels of nursing to support workforce-wide implementation
 - reach consensus on a unified core genomic competency framework.
 - collaborate with external national work plans to promote and embed genomic competencies and capabilities across the UK nursing workforce
 - build and sustain strong working relationships with external stakeholders to support ongoing RCN engagement with the genomics agenda.
-

Impact

To follow.



20. Social media and nursing

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Destiny Osunde, member of the UK Stewards Committee
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	n/a
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of the RCN Congress discusses the advantages and risks of social media for the nursing workforce.

Activities

RCN Council agreed no further action was required for this item.

Left: Destiny Osunde of the UK Stewards' Committee

21. Improved health care for the “unseen”

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Kirsten Bland, Dorset Branch.
Seconder	Geoff Earl, Lothian and Borders Branch
Institute alignment	Nursing Practice Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to demand the governments to mandate specialist accessible health care for people who experience rough sleeping.



Above: Kirsten Bland, Dorset Branch member, speaking at Congress

Key message

We will identify policy levers to secure mandatory specialist accessible health care for people who experience homelessness and rough sleeping. We will also develop content to undertake influencing and inform members about health care for people experiencing homelessness.

Agreed scope of the project

- Engage key colleagues and members across the UK who are active in this area to gather examples of relevant nurse-led services.
 - Identify opportunities to use this content to support the case for investment in such services – for example, through policy reports, media opportunities, and consultation responses where appropriate.
 - Identify and engage relevant stakeholders, leveraging existing coalitions to build momentum and influence in this area.
-

Activities

We have:

- scoped this work, engaging with RCN members and colleagues from across the College
- advocated for mandated specialist services for people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping in our responses to both the NHS England 10-Year Plan consultation and the UK Parliament inquiry into homelessness prevention. We also called for investment in these services in our submission to Budget 2024
- invited RCN members working in homeless health to share examples and case studies of their work to support the resolution
- commissioned an evidence review from the RCN Library on the role of nursing in homeless health.

We will:

- develop resources for RCN members outlining the role of nursing and nurse-led services in homeless health
 - continue to identify and pursue opportunities to lobby in support of this resolution.
-

Impact

The nursing profession will be better equipped to deliver expert, specialist care for people experiencing rough sleeping, and the RCN will have clear examples showcasing the vital role of nursing within homelessness services.

22. Nursing staff working in social care

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Joanna Grant, CYP Community and Continuing Care Forum
Secunder	Rabina Tindale, member of the Nurses in Management and Leadership Forum
Institute alignment	Leadership Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution



Above: Joanna Grant, CYP Community and Continuing Care Forum member, speaking at Congress

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress recognises the value of, and need for, senior nursing leadership within social care across the UK.

Key message

That the RCN recognises the value of, and need for, senior nurses in social care and that this is demonstrated through our ongoing work in this area.

Agreed scope of the project

We have discussed the ongoing work with the proposer and established actions to deliver.

Activities

We have:

- met with the resolution proposer and agreed the scope of work required
 - collaborated with the Social Care Nurse Advisory Councils in England. RCN Independent Health and Social Care (IHSC) lead nurses are members of all 7 regional councils, supporting the integration of social care into nursing plans across health and care settings
 - ensured IHSC representation on RCN Quality Assurance panels to help ensure RCN publications appropriately reflect nursing in social care
 - published several blogs in this area which are available on the RCN website
 - promoted RCN roles to IHSC members, encouraging greater engagement and active participation
 - supported the publication of a blog on leadership in the IHSC sector, written by an RCN Council member (due March 2025)
 - analysed RCN News and Magazine content, noting an increase in articles relevant to both NHS and IHSC members, as well as those specifically focused on IHSC
 - noted a rise in IHSC member representation on RCN Boards and Committees
 - observed an increase in IHSC members joining RCN forums – from 25% in 2021 to 37% in 2024
 - scoped and planned a “Nursing in Social Care” event, scheduled for 6 May at RCN HQ, in partnership with Nicola Ranger and Deb Sturdy, Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care.
-

Impact

IHSC members will continue to see themselves represented in the work of RCN and will see leadership in social care as an aspirational career option, supported by their professional body.

23. Political influencing

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Mathew Sidebottom, Vice Chair, West Yorkshire Branch
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	n/a
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses how we effectively promote the nursing agenda in an election year.

Activities

RCN Council agreed no further action was required for this item

24. How can we achieve a greener health care system?

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Kirsten Bland, Dorset Branch
Secunder	n/a
Institute alignment	Activism Academy, Leadership Academy, Nursing Practice, Academy, and the International Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses how health care staff can reduce the carbon footprint of health care.

Key message

The delivery of health and care services is a significant contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, impacting both climate change and health outcomes. Reducing this contribution through 'Net Zero' goals, actions, and commitments will help mitigate climate impacts and support the development of a more resilient health care system.

As the largest part of the health care workforce and a key interface with patients and communities, nursing offers unique insight into opportunities for sustainable change. Given its size and influence, the nursing profession is well-placed to make a meaningful contribution to climate action and emissions reduction efforts.

Agreed scope of the project

To work with members to identify priorities for RCN professional nursing activity and policy in the short, medium and long term.

This work will complement RCN business activity to calculate our carbon footprint as a business and associated priorities for action to support a move towards 'net zero' and a strategic plan to deliver this.

We have:

- established a short-life Member Advisory Group (MAG) comprising members from diverse settings, roles, and levels of experience in sustainability
- held the first face-to-face member engagement focus group (October) at the West Midlands office, with 10 members attending. The agenda was shaped and approved by MAG members
- confirmed member priorities and perspectives on how RCN professional nursing activity should respond to the climate crisis. These priorities will inform the review and revision of the RCN's formal position on climate change. Key priorities include
- developed a professional nursing work plan outlining short-, medium-, and long-term actions across all health and care settings
- provided consistent and tailored communications to raise awareness and support member engagement and action
- created a range of educational resources on sustainability
- established a member community to support sustainability activities and networking, including the potential development of an RCN Green Activist role
- created a leadership framework to support professional development and define current and future sustainability-related roles, including specialist procurement nurses
- updated and increased the visibility of the RCN's sustainability landing page
- revised the RCN's 2019 position on climate change and conducting a policy gap analysis to support external collaboration and identify areas for added value in RCN policy work
- embedded sustainability within all member-facing trade union and professional planning and delivery activities.

We will:

- develop an RCN professional practice activity plan for approval in line with RCN governance requirements by end of July 2025
- develop and publish an updated RCN statement on climate change by end of May
- complete a policy gap analysis and agree a range of priority positions that will complement RCN activity on this issue by end of 2025.

Impact

The development of an RCN plan that empowers both the RCN and our members to take action in reducing carbon emissions and addressing climate change, particularly within the workplace. Where possible, impact measures will include carbon-positive benefits, alongside metrics that demonstrate productivity and social value.

25. The value of reps

Goal 1

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Mike Travis, Greater Liverpool and Knowsley Branch
Secunder	n/a
Institute alignment	Activism Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the RCN's 'offer' to its trade union representatives.

Key message

The RCN's accredited workplace representatives are our visible presence within the workplace – providing support, guidance, and representation to members, while also working alongside health care colleagues to campaign for and deliver positive change.

Expanding the number and influence of our reps remains a key priority, central to our trade union mission. We are actively investing time and resources into enhancing the rep experience by:

- improving training and development opportunities
- increasing recruitment and retention
- adapting our ways of working to better support reps.

Our vision is for all members to have easy, local access to empowered, skilled workplace representatives.

Agreed scope of the project

The Trade Union Committee (TUC) has long prioritised growing the reach and influence of RCN representatives – focusing both on supporting current reps and improving how we attract and recruit new ones.

Our 5-year strategic plan, *A new dawn for nursing*, reaffirmed this priority, committing to expanding rep coverage and increasing investment in the rep experience.

In 2025, new work has been launched in response to these commitments and the 2024 Congress debate. This activity forms part of the wider RCN Activism Strategy, currently in development and set to launch in 2025. Oversight will be provided by the TUC, with delivery led by the Activism Academy in collaboration with members and staff stakeholders.

Reps project 2025–2027

Approved by the TUC on 6 February 2025, the reps project is now in its early implementation phase. It aims to review current practices, recommend improvements, and develop new initiatives to increase the number and influence of RCN reps.

Phase 1 (2025–2026) will include improvement projects focused on:

- Rep role review (March 2025 – January 2026)
- Facilities time (January – March 2026)
- Support and supervision (April – December 2026)
- Review of expression of interest, accreditation, and disaccreditation processes (April – December 2026)

Phase 2 (2027) will focus on targeted recruitment of new reps.

- Digital innovation - Activism Academy staff are piloting a new app, RCN New Rep Connect, to support peer-to-peer engagement for reps within their first 2 years of accreditation. Following evaluation and refinement, the app will be expanded to include other activist groups by the end of 2025.
 - Governance and engagement - Proposer Involvement: The original resolution proposer met with the Lead for Activist Communities in 2024 to explore opportunities for involvement.
 - Committee oversight - TUC reps leads were consulted before project submission. Following TUC approval, Rhian Wheater was nominated as Co-Chair of the Project Board. Communication with the Committee will continue via Rhian and regular project updates.
 - Member engagement - Reps' views will be gathered via rep committees and potentially the Changemakers community. Key committees, including the Nursing Support Worker Committee, PNC, and Council, have been invited to nominate delegates to the Project Board. The Reps Role Review workstream group will meet on 18 March 2025 to plan wider engagement.
 - Regional and country involvement - Country Directors contributed to the project plan and are invited to participate in the Board and workstreams or nominate deputies. Regional and country staff will also support delivery as needed, ensuring local Boards are kept informed and involved.
-

Activities

We have:

- signed a new agreement with Open College Network London (OCN) to strengthen quality assurance processes for reps' learning and development
- analysed reps-related data from the CRM and activism survey, leading to the development of an initial strategy
- scoped options for peer-to-peer communication platforms and progressed development of an in-house solution
- launched a new structure, framework, and quality assurance process for reps' continued learning at the October 2024 UK Reps' Conference, with follow-up communications sent to all reps
- resolved technical issues related to the in-house peer-to-peer platform, enabling further development
- secured TUC approval for the reps project plan. A Reps Project Board – comprising members and staff – has been established and will meet quarterly. The first meeting was held on 7 March 2025, and a blog update from the TUC Chair has been published and shared with all reps via the reps briefing
- given a demonstration of the new activist-to-activist app at the March 2025 joint reps and plan to launch the app at Congress, including sign up opportunities.

We will:

- expand the peer-to-peer app to include additional activist groups, including reps, by Q4 2025
- continue the reps role review workstream throughout 2025, engaging members and staff in reviewing existing rep roles and descriptors. Proposed changes will be submitted to the Project Board for feedback before going to TUC for approval
- roll out updated rep practices RCN-wide in 2026, alongside a focused recruitment drive to bring in new reps. Strengthened training, peer networks, and community support will ensure both new and existing reps are better supported and more empowered.

Impact

We expect this work to place the RCN in the strongest position to meet its strategic goal of tripling the number of workplace reps by the end of the 5-year plan. Our focus is on ensuring that as many members as possible can access a rep in their workplace, and that every member who wants to become a rep is supported to do so – regardless of sector, seniority, or background.

This work is central to the RCN's shift towards an organising approach, strengthening our ability to mobilise members, expand our workplace presence, and support the nursing profession at both local and national levels.

26. The future of RCN boards and branches

Goal 2

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Helen Oatham, Norfolk Branch, Eastern Board
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	Activism Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the future of boards and branches.

Key message

We appreciate the vital and distinct roles that boards and branches play in our internal governance and organisation of member activity. We have a plan to ensure branches and boards are supported and adjusted where needed to ensure they are strong, relevant and accessible to all members.

Agreed scope of the project

Current work within the RCN is focused on clarifying the mission and purpose of branches, identifying opportunities to improve how they operate, and enhancing their overall effectiveness. It also aims to make it easier for members to get involved in their branch and to ensure they are supported to do so.

Active members in both branches and boards will benefit from improved communication tools and new ways to contribute effectively to RCN activity.

Right: Helen Oatham, Norfolk Branch, Eastern Board, speaking at Congress 2024

Activities

Current activity:

- ongoing work within the RCN aims to clarify the mission and purpose of branches, strengthen how they operate, and improve the ways members can get involved and be supported in their branch activity.

We have:

- begun an internal audit focused on branch effectiveness. The findings will support evidence-based decision-making
- launched a review and improvement project to evaluate and enhance the learning and development offer for branch activists.

We will:

- review and update the RCN Branch Terms of Reference, informed by the audit findings
- begin a review of branch activist role descriptors following agreement on updated Terms of Reference
- collate and analyse insights from previous branch reviews to inform planning
- deepen our understanding of branch challenges by engaging both active members and those not previously involved
- research how similar organisations have addressed common branch-related issues
- complete a review of the overall purpose and mission of RCN branches.

Impact

Delivering this plan will provide the RCN with a robust evidence base and deeper understanding of its current structures, enabling informed progress in strengthening branches and boards.

This work aims to enhance the effectiveness of RCN's branch structures, creating diverse, inclusive, and dynamic spaces where members can engage in campaigning, representation, advocacy, and organising.



27. Policy for humanitarian crises

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Rachel Hollis, Chair of the Professional Nursing Committee
Seconder	Mohammad Ibrahim, Cancer Forum
Institute alignment	International Nursing Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to update and implement a policy for responding to humanitarian crises.

Key message

The nursing profession continues to respond to multiple overlapping humanitarian crises worldwide. As the largest nursing trade union and professional body globally, we are uniquely positioned to advocate and act in response to these challenges.

In 2022, RCN Council approved the RCN Humanitarian Crisis Guidance. Following an emergency resolution passed by members at Congress 2024, we are now updating and implementing this guidance.

The revised guidance and implementation framework will provide clear parameters for when and how the RCN responds to humanitarian crises. It will ensure ethical, timely, and consistent engagement with global and domestic issues.

Agreed scope of the project

- Review and update the RCN Humanitarian Crisis Guidance in consultation with key partners and stakeholders.
- Develop an implementation framework that includes mechanisms for monitoring and responding to humanitarian crises. This framework will outline a consultative approach, including engagement with diaspora communities, to ensure equity and inclusivity in decision-making.
- Design programmes of support for nurses in conflict and post-conflict recovery, to be delivered based on an assessment of need, scope, and the delivery capacity of the RCN International Nursing Academy.
- Raise awareness and advocate on the challenges faced by nurses in conflict settings, including publishing a report on attacks against health workers and hosting a symposium at the ICN Congress 2025.
- Update RCN guidance for nurses returning from humanitarian work, ensuring it reflects current best practice and member needs.

Activities

We have:

- agreed the overall plan and scope for this work (see project scope above)
- revised the Humanitarian Crisis Guidance based on feedback from committee members; the updated version is pending approval by the Executive Team and Council in April 2025
- provided an update to the Professional Nursing Committee, with input gathered at the 6 February 2025 meeting
- consulted with the International Committee through meetings and correspondence
- continued to respond to global humanitarian crises using the current guidance – for example, issuing public statements, including the RCN Council statement calling for an end to the targeting of health workers and health systems
- offered practical support to nursing staff working in conflict zones, including in Myanmar and Gaza
- facilitated a meeting between Myanmar nurses and UK parliamentarians at the House of Lords to highlight their experiences and advocate for support.
- finalised and agreed the accompanying implementation framework – led by the RCN International Nursing Academy – which was approved by Council in April.

Impact

RCN members are assured that the College is responding to humanitarian crises in a transparent and equitable manner.

The RCN shows solidarity by providing practical support to nursing colleagues worldwide.

The RCN raises awareness of the challenges faced by nurses in conflict zones and takes appropriate action to support both international nursing colleagues and those returning from humanitarian missions.

28. Impact of cost improvement programmes

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Heather McWha, North West - Greater Manchester
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	Nursing Workforce Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Matter for discussion

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the impact of cost improvement programmes on newly qualified nurse recruitment

Key message

Our main aim is to determine the size and scale of the problem, to inform action needed.

Agreed scope of the project

- To determine the size and scale of the problem and whether it is a problem across the UK, or more isolated.

Activities

We have:

- engaged with RCN regions and countries. Early insights suggest that employment challenges are regional and affect specific student groups, not UK-wide. Issues include job advertisement changes, missed application deadlines, and interview challenges. Some regions predict greater impact in the coming year
- collaborated with the RCN's Policy Team who are gathering evidence to build a national picture, identifying trends and potential problem areas
- attended a multiprofessional NHSE roundtable. NHSE's small review (n=20) found that 5% of nursing job adverts required 6 months' experience. Key issues raised included the need for better student support with CVs, interviews, and job availability expectations, as well as a lack of transparent national data on vacancies and workforce gaps. Concerns also extended to direct entry, apprenticeships, nursing associates, and T-Level students
- NHSE action: Set up task and finish groups to explore and address recruitment challenges.

Impact

Ongoing Monitoring indicates worsening financial situation across the NHS in 2025 may impact opportunities for new graduates. A series of webinars is being delivered through spring to support members maximise their potential in securing roles.



29. Nursing educator workforce

Goal 1

Submitting Entity/Proposer	Dr Rachael Major, Education Forum
Seconder	n/a
Institute alignment	Nursing Workforce Academy
Matter for discussion or Resolution?	Resolution

You said

That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to lobby governments to ensure we have a nursing educator workforce for the future which will protect and invest in the degree route into nursing.

Key message

That the RCN will lobby the 4 UK governments to ensure the nursing educator workforce is an attractive career pathway to support degree level nursing education.

Agreed scope of the project

This ongoing project is a collaboration between the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence and the RCN Policy Team. Its aim is to assess the current state of the UK nursing education workforce, focusing on workforce numbers, working conditions, and role satisfaction. The gathered data will inform the development of an RCN policy position to advocate with the 4 UK governments.

Activities

We have:

- agreed on initial actions for delivering this item
- hosted a roundtable/listening event with external organisations, including the NMC, Council of Deans (CoD), Universities UK, NHS England, and RCN country Associate Directors (July 2024)
- held 3 online nurse educator listening events, each attended by around 100 educators (September 2024)
- in collaboration with CoD, co-chaired a listening event for senior nurse educators
- repeated the England Freedom of Information of universities and the nurse educator survey
- completed the nurse educator and education literature and archive review.
- publish *Fixing the leaking pipeline* to assess the gaps in the domestic nursing supply chain. rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/rcn-fixing-the-leaking-pipeline-uk-pub-012-012

Impact

Following the listening events, policy colleagues are conducting a follow-up of the England universities FoI request and UK-wide nurse educator survey. This will lead to the publication of a comprehensive nurse educator report, set for release prior to Congress in May 2025.

The survey is also exploring the potential for the RCN to endorse a staff-student ratio, similar to those adopted by other professional bodies such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

In addition, the Nurse Education Summit has been rescheduled to November 2025 as we are collaborating with the Chair of CoD Scotland to organise a nurse education event involving all 4 countries.

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

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