



**READY  
TO CELEBRATE?**  
Find out how you can get  
involved with RCN centenary  
activities – P5 and P8

ISSUE NO. 334 DECEMBER 2015

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**STUDENT FUNDING**  
NEWS P3

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**CONTRACT CHANGES**  
ANALYSIS P4

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**NEW PAY CAMPAIGN**  
FEATURES P9

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# TACKLING FGM

MARY SEACOLE AWARD WINNERS P10



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

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## Securing safe staffing

RCN members have been instrumental in moving the safe nurse staffing levels bill one step closer to becoming law in Wales. Despite support from all political parties, the bill's progress had stalled waiting for a technical motion to be laid. But a concerted effort from RCN members, which saw hundreds of emails and postcards sent to Welsh assembly members, saw it progressed to the next stage. The final vote to make the bill law will be held next year.

## Advice during strikes

The RCN has updated its guidance for nursing staff whose colleagues are involved in industrial action. As *RCN Bulletin* went to press junior doctors were poised to stage a series of walk-outs in a dispute over contract changes and unsocial hours pay. The advice outlines what rights you have in terms of taking on increased workloads while avoiding undermining lawful industrial action. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/nwh3lj6>

## Agency cap impact

The RCN is monitoring the impact of agency spending caps on the NHS in England as new rules came into force last month. RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies said: "While the NHS needs to save money, the cap may cause more problems if it makes it harder to provide safe staffing levels. The root cause of the issue still needs to be addressed by paying nurses fairly."



## Pay campaign launch

The RCN has launched a campaign to highlight the value of nursing staff and the need for them to be recognised as crucial members of the health service. *Nursing Counts* aims to convince politicians that nurses must be awarded an appropriate pay deal. It supports members to speak up about the challenging work they do.

It comes as new evidence reveals nurses have suffered a 9.6 per cent drop in real terms earnings since 2008. The RCN argues that restraining pay while demand is increasing is a false economy, making it harder to retain staff and forcing many to work for agencies to make ends meet.

The public have already shown their huge support for nursing. In a survey commissioned by the RCN three quarters of the 2,000 people questioned said nurses are paid too little and 46 per cent said they'd be prepared to pay extra in income tax to go towards the salaries of nursing staff.

## Has someone shone?

The RCN is asking members to nominate people who have gone the extra mile to advance nursing and improve working conditions. RCN fellowships are awarded to UK-registered nurses while honorary fellowships recognise individuals who are not UK-registered nurses but have made a significant impact on health care. Awards of merit recognise those who have provided exceptional service to the RCN.



*The Government must show that it values nursing by putting an end to these continuing attacks on pay*

Find out more about the new pay campaign on page 9 or visit [www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts](http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts)

Nominations close on 8 February with winners announced at RCN Congress in June. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/rcnawards](http://www.rcn.org.uk/rcnawards)

12 days of giftness



Get ready to unwrap a new, exclusive offer every weekday from 1–16 December. Make sure you have access to RCNXtra and save on this season's shopping and gifts!

*Xtra benefits. Xtra easy.*

[www.rcn.org.uk/xtra](http://www.rcn.org.uk/xtra)



## The fight goes on

The RCN is continuing its campaign against the controversial Trade Union Bill. Activists lobbied MPs at Westminster last month arguing that proposals to limit the time they can spend on their duties will hamper productivity and workplace safety. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/tubill](http://www.rcn.org.uk/tubill)

## Council election results

The following members have been elected following the close of voting in the RCN Council elections:

**East Midlands** – David Miller  
**Eastern** – Trevor Allen  
**London** – Cynthia Davis and Dr Matthew Hodson MBE  
**North West** – Dave Dawes and Professor Janet Marsden FRCN  
**Northern** – Trevor Peel  
**Northern Ireland** – Siobhan Donald  
**Scotland** – Elspeth Caithness  
**South East** – Maria Nicholson  
**South West** – Vicky Brotherton  
**Wales** – Richard Jones MBE  
**West Midlands** – Sue Warner  
**Yorkshire and the Humber** – Carol Popplestone  
**Health Practitioner** – Brenda McDonald

The RCN would like to thank all candidates who stood in the election and those Council members who are stepping down. They are Kevin Bell, Brendan Garry, Rachel Greaves, David Harding-Price, Andrew Nelson, Ian Norris, Margaret North, Andy Patrick, Chris Thomas, Mike Travis, Roy Tomlinson and Anne Wells. The process to elect a student member of Council is currently underway.

# Student funding comes under fire



*It's crucial we get more detail on these plans*

The RCN has expressed serious concerns about Government proposals to change the way nurse training is funded and planned. In the Spending Review last week, Chancellor George Osborne announced that there will be 10,000 additional nursing and health professional training places in England but students will have to pay tuition fees and use a loan instead of receiving means-tested bursaries from 2017.

The RCN believes this risks reducing the number of older students being able to afford to enter nursing and threatens the vital link between future nursing professionals and the NHS. It could also compromise national workforce planning and cause difficulties in getting nurses trained when and where they are needed most.

RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies described the proposals as deeply worrying: "At last, there seems to be an attempt to address the nursing workforce shortage but the Government is going about it entirely the wrong way. There's a reason nursing students have a link with the

NHS from the very start of their studies - it ensures a relationship which often lasts throughout their career until retirement."

The RCN argues that nursing courses are not comparable to other undergraduate degrees with student nurses having a longer academic year and spending 50 per cent of their time in clinical practice. This gives them fewer opportunities to supplement their incomes in the way that other students do. Many are older than the average student and have families to provide for.

"It's crucial we get more detail on these plans as soon as possible," Janet added. "The design of the model is critical and the RCN will be seeking to influence at every turn. We have 100 years' experience of shaping nurse education and we'll be looking to use that now. The current plans create a false economy. With salaries as they currently stand, it is unlikely new nurses will be able to repay student debt during the course of their careers. It will be a cost picked back up by the Government three decades down the road."

🗣️ The RCN wants to gather evidence about the impact of these changes to use in negotiations with the Government. Visit [preview.rcn.org.uk/studentbursaries](http://preview.rcn.org.uk/studentbursaries) to share your story. See page 7 for more.



# 4 ANALYSIS

## The best of nursing in Wales

### Members' achievements celebrated in annual nursing awards

A ceremony held in Cardiff last month for the RCN in Wales Nurse of the Year Awards 2015 recognised the outstanding work of a number of individuals from the nursing family.

Winners were selected from 16 categories including an Improving Individual and Population Health Award, a Health Care Support Worker Award and an Innovation in Nursing Award.

The ultimate accolade of Wales Nurse of the Year 2015 was awarded to Claire Harris, a ward sister who works at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

Claire has been instrumental in delivering a stroke design programme, aiming to create a single site stroke service for patients. This has led to the introduction of six hyper acute stroke beds at Royal Gwent Hospital. As a result the Acute



Stroke Unit has seen an increase in discharge rates and a reduction in the average length of stay for patients.

Claire said: "I'm really overwhelmed by winning this award. It doesn't seem quite real. Nursing is something I do every day and something that I love. It doesn't feel like a job. I wouldn't be where I am without the help and support of all the nurses I've worked with. It really is a team effort."



*Nursing is something that I love. It doesn't feel like a job*

RCN Wales Director Tina Donnelly said: "Claire is a prime example of the right nursing care for the right patients. She is an admirable individual and a worthy winner of the Wales Nurse of the Year Award 2015. I would like to extend my congratulations not just to Claire but to all the award winners and shortlisted nominees."

Other winners on the night included school health nurse Brenda Scourfield, who won the Lifetime Achievement Award, and Steffan Robbins, who claimed the top spot in the category for nursing students.

Attendees at the ceremony included the Secretary of State for Wales Stephen Crabb MP, and pictured left to right with Claire second from the right: Gaynor Jones, Chair of the RCN Welsh Board and RCN Council Member for Wales, Cecilia Amin, RCN President, and Janet Davies, RCN Chief Executive.

## It's OK to say 'no'

### Members should feel empowered to reject unfair proposals to work extra hours with no overtime pay

The RCN is concerned about an increasing number of NHS trusts that are asking nurses to voluntarily increase their contracted hours at a basic rate of pay.

At least three employers in England are known to have adopted this approach in a bid to reduce their spending on agency staff. They have done so without consultation with NHS trade unions and in light of limits announced in late November

on the amount agency nurses can be paid.

RCN Head of Employment Relations Josie Irwin said: "We're appalled that trusts are exploiting the good nature of nurses in this way. It is manipulative and wrong. Not only will this create divisions among staff but it will also impact on the morale and retention of nurses. Our members need to know that they can reject these proposals and it is OK to say 'no'."

The RCN is negotiating with the trusts involved to try and avoid a



*We're appalled trusts are exploiting the good nature of nurses like this*

formal dispute. "Sadly and rather worryingly, we fear this is the thin edge of the wedge," added Josie.

"As trusts look to plug staffing gaps while staying within the limits of capped agency spending, we suspect more employers will look to adopt similar strategies.

"Nurses are entitled to be paid overtime rates and should not be guilt-tripped into volunteering to work extra hours at plain time, particularly when most nurses already work frequent excess hours without receiving any pay."

## Are you ready to celebrate?

The RCN's centenary year is just around the corner

In 2016 the RCN will be marking 100 years since its inception with lots of activities for members to get involved with. The centenary is a unique opportunity to celebrate the RCN's achievements, raise awareness of contemporary issues and shape a strong future for nursing.

From January, an exhibition charting the 100 year history of the RCN will be in the library and heritage centre in London. Exhibits will explore how the membership has grown and changed over the years and how the College has supported nursing staff.

If nursing literature is your thing, then why not submit a book review and be one of 100 promoted throughout the centenary year? The RCN is keen to know about books that have changed people's perspective on nursing. Submit your review at [www.rcn.org.uk/RCN100](http://www.rcn.org.uk/RCN100) before the deadline of 11 December.

New members will receive a special centenary membership badge, which



will also be available to members who participate in any one of the 100 centenary events being held across the UK in 2016. Among them is the International Centenary Conference held at the QEII centre in London from 22 to 23 November.

And don't forget to take part in the centenary photography competition, which aims to capture the innovation and diversity of the modern day nursing profession. Actress Tamzin Outhwaite (pictured) has recently been unveiled as the celebrity judge. Visit [www.rcn100photo.org.uk](http://www.rcn100photo.org.uk) to enter.



For details on all of this and more visit [www.rcn.org.uk/RCN100](http://www.rcn.org.uk/RCN100)

## The view from here

Stuart McKenzie  
Chair of RCN Congress



RCN Congress in Glasgow next June still feels a long way off but planning for the event never stops. We're now looking for members to submit ideas for debates to make Congress 2016 more engaging than ever before.

The best thing about the last event in Bournemouth, my first in the role as Chair, was how inclusive the debating was. The issues had broad appeal and members from all facets of nursing were able to contribute, which really is the secret to a successful Congress. We talked about so much – climate change, safe staffing, overseas nurses – and showed such solidarity along the way.

Now it's time for you to take charge. Are you being affected by something that touches the lives of other nursing staff? Is there a pressing issue at your workplace that needs addressing on the national stage?

Topic submissions are welcomed but must come via the committee of your RCN branch, forum or country/regional board. We can put you in touch if you don't know who to contact.

[congressagenda@rcn.org.uk](http://congressagenda@rcn.org.uk)

## NI ballot considered

Nursing staff in Northern Ireland could be asked to vote on taking industrial action

The RCN's governing Council is due to consider whether members in Northern Ireland should be balloted on industrial action over the lack of any pay award for nursing staff there.

Janice Smyth, Director of the RCN in Northern Ireland, said: "Nurses are angry that more than halfway through the financial year, there is

still no indication of a pay award. They're working under extreme pressure in a system unfit for purpose. They feel devalued, demoralised and disgusted at the total disregard for the NHS Pay Review Body's recommendation that nurses should receive a one per cent rise."

Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK with no pay offer for nursing staff whilst salary increases have been awarded to other public servants such as teachers and police officers.



Action needs to be taken immediately to resolve this unacceptable situation



## Feedback

**Julie Williams**  
Senior RCN Officer



When I was nursing, I remember the panic I felt one day when my manager told me my Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) registration was about to expire. I renewed when my shift finished and I memorised my renewal date as a consequence of my close shave.

A member whose registration actually had run out was referred to me recently. She rang for advice because her manager had informed her that she hadn't been on the register whilst doing two bank shifts earlier that week. She hadn't realised her renewal fee was overdue.

I advised her to ring the NMC as soon as possible to explain. She rang, she paid, they renewed and now, thankfully, she's back on the register.

But she was lucky – her registration had run out on 31 October. If her PIN had expired the following day, she would have had to wait up to six weeks to go back on the register and been prohibited from practising in that time.

The NMC's grace period for late payment saved her. But, since 1 November, there is no grace period – you're off the register immediately.

Don't let it happen to you.

[www.nmc.org.uk/nmc-online](http://www.nmc.org.uk/nmc-online)

# What you've been saying

## Each for their own

Regarding "Joanna's" email in the last issue of RCN Bulletin ("What you've been saying", November), I read it twice to make sure I had not misunderstood. Doctors are perfectly capable, as recent press coverage shows, of standing up for themselves in the current row over their salaries and working conditions. They do not need nurses' support, many of whom, despite taking on extra duties/roles/responsibilities are, by comparison, poorly paid. I don't recall the BMA supporting nurses when they have had pay disputes.

Jackie, by email

## Trust support?

I've been reading with heavy hearted interest about the revalidation process that nurses will have to undergo from next year. I can't say I'm overly excited about the prospect of spending my own time to complete the necessary documentation, but if that is what is required, then so be it.

My question is, are we going to be permitted study days to complete the required work or

will we need to use our days off? As a ward nurse I frequently work over my shift due to staffing shortages, without then having to go home and start writing reflections. Is it unreasonable for us to be granted this time off by our employers, as clearly it is in their best interests for us to complete revalidation in time?

Carole, by email

## Challenging the stigma

More people than ever are living with HIV, including an estimated 104,000 in the UK. This year's World AIDS Day, held on 1 December, provided a great opportunity to raise awareness and show support for those affected by the virus, as well as to challenge the myths and stigmas associated with it. Over the years the RCN has worked to raise awareness of HIV and has encouraged all health care workers to find out more about it. By learning about HIV and challenging the stigmas, you can make a difference to someone's life.

Jason Warriner, by email

## Hot topic

### Should smoking be banned in outdoor public spaces?

**Wendy Preston**, a nurse consultant, says: "I think it would be useful to ban smoking in public outdoor spaces to continue the campaign to reduce exposure of tobacco smoking to children, especially in parks and recreational grounds. Over recent years strategies like the ban on smoking inside public places, tobacco sales restriction and smoke free cars for children have denormalised tobacco smoking."

**Ruth Francis**, a student paediatric nurse, disagrees. She says: "I don't think smoking should be banned in outdoor public spaces as I feel we risk heading towards a censorious society with rules over people's preferences taking precedence over the potential health risk to others. I am not

offended by someone smoking in a public space as long as they are respectful and do not smoke in close proximity to others."

**Karen Chilver**, a palliative care nurse, adds: "I don't smoke, and I don't like being behind smokers in the park, when their smoke blows in my face. But people smoke for different reasons. Smoking is an addiction. People smoke to cope with stress, or difficult times. As a palliative care nurse, stopping the patients I see smoking is too little too late, and seems inhumane, though encouragement to try and cut down and considering nicotine patches once they are too ill to smoke outside seems sensible. We are probably far more at risk from pollution than smoking outside."

## A quick question

How will you spend Christmas?

“Volunteering as the Healthcare Manager for Crisis at Christmas.”

Jason Warriner

“Working – nursing doesn’t stop at Christmas, and in many places the workload increases!”

Donato Tallo

“With my family, knowing that in the previous 364 days I have endeavoured to pass on the baton to another generation of highly skilled nurses.”

Ruth Aird, nurse educator

## 3 things I believe

1. Kindness should underpin every aspect of nursing
2. The importance of good communication in nursing can never be overestimated
3. Nurses should support each other, as together we are stronger

Nicola Meredith, specialist immunisation nurse

## A crushing blow

**We must work together to fight changes affecting our future workforce**

From the moment the RCN heard rumours that the Treasury planned to find extra money for the NHS by cutting funding for student education, I have been working behind the scenes to prevent it.

There’s one word to describe the decision to take funding for student education out of the ring-fenced NHS budget – crushing. After subjecting nursing to years of pay restraint, the Government now plans to scrap funding for pre-registration nurse education in England. Of course we welcome an increase in training places and the £3.8 billion cash injection for the NHS but not if nursing students have to pay for it.

This is a reaction to a short-term problem of the Government’s own making. If they hadn’t cut staffing levels and slashed student nurse places in the past, we wouldn’t be forced to play catch up now – and they are using this as an excuse to justify raiding our education budget.

Our students are our future and their relationship with the NHS is critical. But the Government is now throwing them to the market and absolving themselves of any responsibility to ensure we have the right number of nurses in the right place with the right skills. What is more important to the NHS than the staff who provide the care?

We’ve done a huge amount of work to engage with politicians about how best to boost the nursing workforce. Yet despite the RCN’s 100 years’ experience of nurse education, we were not consulted before this announcement.

I know many of you want to know why the RCN has failed to prevent



this change. I don’t blame you for asking, but I want you to know how hard we tried. We now need to pull together and do everything we can to influence the plans.

We have to recognise that politicians see the future through election-tinted glasses. They don’t understand the long-term nature of health care – their decision to cut public health budgets is another demonstration of this. We know we will be dealing with the consequences of their decisions long after this Government passes into history. Consequences that include poor health and no handle on workforce planning.

I hope Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland don’t make the same mistake, we will certainly be putting all our efforts into preventing this.

On the same day we had some very different, good news with the safe nurse staffing levels bill being approved to go to the next stage of the law making process in Wales – so well done to our members and staff in Wales and to the politicians who have been brave enough to take such an important step in protecting patient safety. Fingers crossed for legislation.

I have heard your concerns but the RCN is YOU – get involved and together we will work to make sure the Government knows what these changes will mean.

**Janet Davies**  
RCN Chief Executive



## From the heart

**Kirsty Cass**  
Health care assistant



I love my role as a health care assistant (HCA).

I first encountered the hospital where I work as a patient – I was in for an operation and while waiting to see the consultant I discovered there were some vacancies for HCAs.

I just knew it was a place I’d like to work so I applied. I was delighted to be offered the job.

Because I’d met some of the staff at my operation it was nice seeing familiar faces on my first day. The team I work with is great and I’ve had lots of in-house training.

I like to make a patient’s stay as comfortable as I can.

My motto is to treat people how I like to be treated.

It took me a long time to find a career I am passionate about, but at the age of 53 I’m so glad I found it.

When you go home knowing you’ve helped someone it gives you such a lift.

There’s simply no better feeling.

[www.rcn.org.uk/hca](http://www.rcn.org.uk/hca)



# 2016: Time to celebrate



Royal College of Nursing

## 100 PAGE-TURNERS

To celebrate the RCN centenary we're compiling a list of 100 books that have made a difference to nursing lives. We're not looking for the best books or the most popular, just the ones that have made a difference to you and why. We'll then select 100 recommendations which will be shared online, tweeted, and displayed in our four libraries. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/RCN100](http://www.rcn.org.uk/RCN100) for more information. The deadline to submit book reviews is 11 December.

## COMPASS100N

 #RCN100



## CRAFTY WORK

The Townswomen's Guild has handstitched a special RCN centenary banner. More will be revealed next year.



## 100 EVENTS

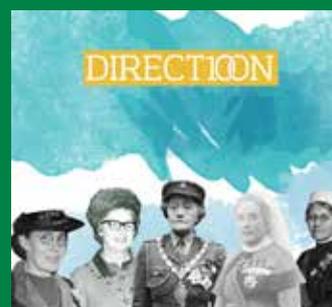
As part of the celebrations the RCN will be branding 100 events for the occasion. This will include the RCN's International Centenary Conference in London and RCN Congress 2016 taking place in Glasgow. Any member who attends an event will receive a gold-coloured centenary membership badge, which will not be available for general sale.

## THE VOICE OF NURSING

We'll be looking at the history of the RCN as the voice of nursing in a dedicated exhibition at our library and heritage centre. The exhibition will explore how our membership has grown and changed over the last 100 years and how the College has supported and spoken for the nursing profession.

## ON FILM

Look out for a special centenary film launching in January.



 [RCN100@rcn.org.uk](mailto:RCN100@rcn.org.uk)

 [/royalcollegeofnursing](https://www.facebook.com/royalcollegeofnursing)

More to come in January!

 [www.rcn.org.uk/RCN100](http://www.rcn.org.uk/RCN100)

# What are you worth?

The RCN has launched a new campaign to demonstrate the value and complexity of nursing. David Ford explores the importance of proving the profession deserves more



Samantha Smith is a senior staff nurse at a walk-in clinic in Scotland. That's her day job but at night she works as part of the "see and treat" service in the Scottish county of Angus.

"We work with paramedics to provide care overnight in rural areas, often as the first response to 999 calls," she says. "You have to be prepared for everything. That's what I love most about my job, as well as the opportunity to learn new skills such as paediatrics and palliative care. Over time, the service has evolved to meet the needs of the local community. Regularly mixing night and day shifts can be hard, but it's good to know the skills I've learnt are being used to benefit patients."

Working around the clock to provide the best care to those in need will be a familiar story to most of you. You're probably doing the same yourself. The RCN knows thousands of nursing staff are going the extra mile to make a difference in their communities and yet they remain underpaid and seemingly undervalued by the Government.

That's why the RCN has launched *Nursing Counts* – a campaign to show the value of nursing and ensure nurses and health care assistants receive fair pay for their dedication to provide top quality care. The campaign approach is to get ahead of the game – to anticipate the Government's next steps with regards Agenda for Change, be on top of developments in the four countries and be ready for the NHS Pay Review Body's recommendations for 2016, expected to be announced in March.

## 'Unfair and wrong'

Michael Brown, who chairs RCN Council as well as the committee of members directing the campaign, says: "Nurses' pay is now 10 per cent behind inflation. This simply isn't acceptable. Nurses are often the main breadwinner in the family and they're struggling to pay their bills. We've got some members reliant on food banks. They spend all their time caring for others yet they're not paid enough to care for themselves and their loved ones."



*This ongoing attack on our pay, terms and conditions needs to end*

"It's unfair and it's wrong. Our aim is to show there can be no argument against an improved pay offer for all nursing staff."

As well as building on existing public support for the profession (see page 2), the campaign will highlight the complexity of nursing roles and provide strong evidence that staff deserve more pay in recognition of their responsibilities.

To do this the RCN needs your help. You can submit your nursing story via the campaign website and access a pay calculator which indicates what you would be earning if your salary had increased in line with inflation.

"You only have to look at the impact of years of pay restraint to see why this is so important," adds Michael. "There is now a recruitment and retention crisis in the NHS and independent sector as growing numbers of nurses and health care assistants consider leaving the profession. From the public sector pay cap to increases in pension payments, there are so many things impacting on the income of nursing staff right now. This ongoing attack on our pay, terms and conditions needs to end."

"It's a travesty that you can earn the same amount working in a supermarket as you can as a newly qualified nurse. The situation shows a complete disregard for the training, expertise, dedication, resilience and resourcefulness required to enter and stay in the profession. We need members to get involved so we can make sure your voices are heard loud and clear."

 [www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts](http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts)

## Tackling FGM

Tom Metcalf interviews three winners of this year's Mary Seacole Awards who are each undertaking projects to increase support for women affected by female genital mutilation

Mandatory reporting rules for female genital mutilation (FGM) were recently introduced in England and Wales, making it a legal requirement for nurses, midwives and other health professionals to tell the police about cases of FGM in girls under 18.

Although FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985, the practice remains common in some communities, and an estimated 137,000 women and girls in England and Wales are thought to be affected.

The growing awareness of FGM, and the need to tackle it, was reflected in this year's Mary Seacole Awards, which fund nurses and midwives to work to improve the health outcomes of people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. Over the next 12 months, three out of the five awardees will use their funding to undertake projects related to FGM.

### Building confidence

Joanne McEwan, a health visitor at Oxford NHS Foundation Trust, plans to use technology to help health professionals tackle FGM.

"In east Oxford you have people from all over the world, some from places where FGM is part of the culture," says Joanne. "Some women are here to study for PhDs, but there are many who don't speak English and have never received high quality health care. There are also a lot of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) with families living in a single bedroom."

This can present a lot of challenges for health visitors.

Joanne McEwan



Judith Ormrod



"They often feel as if they don't have the knowledge or confidence to talk about FGM," says Joanne. "It's not an easy subject to talk about and they worry about being culturally insensitive, taking into consideration the difficult social circumstances in which some of the families live."

Having worked in Egypt – the country with the highest rate of FGM in the world – for 13 years, Joanne was all too familiar with the practice, and on her return to the UK felt it was important she did something to address it. She now works as FGM lead for health visiting in

Oxfordshire, as well as running a special interest group for professionals who work with women and girls at risk of FGM, including GPs, school nurses and midwives.

To aid their efforts Joanne plans to develop an app which will help health professionals identify girls at risk of FGM and open a discussion about it. The app will include a map of areas of high FGM prevalence, questions to help raise the issue in a sensitive manner and examples of the different terminology and language used to describe the process. It will also show the user if there's an FGM health pathway to follow in their area.

"The app will make it easier for health workers to talk about FGM and give them more confidence," says Joanne. "It's something to have at your fingertips to help you start a conversation and identify those at risk"

### Cultural sensitivity

RCN member Judith Ormrod plans to use her award to help train nursing students to provide culturally sensitive and competent care to women affected by or at risk of FGM.

Judith, a nurse and psychologist by training, spends most of her working time as a lecturer at the University of Manchester, although she spends one day a week as a counsellor at her local NHS trust.

She has a particular interest in women's health and has worked in Tanzania and Zambia, as well as spending time in Sierra Leone earlier this year, where she provided resilience training at



*It's not an easy subject to talk about*

For details of all the winners of the 2015 Mary Seacole Awards visit [www.rcn.org.uk/msawards](http://www.rcn.org.uk/msawards)

Aissa Edon



Photos by Barney Newman

maternity and neo-natal units for mothers affected by Ebola.

“FGM is an issue which crosses international, national and local boundaries,” she says. “But there’s a lack of published literature for students caring for women affected by it.

“Manchester is very multicultural. There are a lot of people from Nigeria and Somalia, countries with a high prevalence of FGM. Women from these countries are often reluctant to discuss health care and a lot of them suffer in silence. Nurses need to be aware of this and be able to raise and deal with issues in a compassionate and respectful manner. It’s hugely important.”

Judith’s project involves increasing the knowledge of nursing students so they will be better equipped to provide the appropriate care to patients and their families in both hospital and community settings. The project has several strands, as Judith explains.

“I’ll be working with women to find out their recent experiences of NHS health care – how they have found



*Nurses need to be able to deal with issues in a compassionate and respectful manner*

the care in the hospital and community and what they would hope student nurses are aware of to provide culturally competent care.

“It also involves working with the students themselves. I’ll be running focus groups with third-year students, who will have been working with women affected by FGM, and listening to their experiences. I’ll be working to create a knowledge assessment tool as well, which will be piloted with second-year students.”

### Psychological impact

Aissa Edon is a midwife and FGM specialist at Hillingdon Hospital in north-west London. Her project involves looking at the psychological and psychosexual needs of women who have undergone FGM and their partners.

“In this country there’s a big focus on the physical aspects of FGM, but not so much on the psychological impact,” says Aissa, who was born in Mali and raised in France before moving to the UK four years ago. “In the past, links weren’t made between FGM and

physical complications, and although that’s changed now the same is happening with the psychological and psychosexual side of things.”

Aissa plans to go into the community and talk to people about what they feel they need in terms of support, education and provision. She says her ultimate aim is to have holistic FGM care in NHS services across the country.

### What do the rules mean?

The legal duty to report child cases of FGM to the police came into force on 31 October. It applies to all regulated health professionals in England and Wales and is mandatory. It means nurses and midwives are obliged to report all known cases of FGM in under-18s, whether it is disclosed by the victim or seen by the professional. Failure to report cases within a month, unless there are “exceptional” safeguarding issues, could result in members facing internal disciplinary action or referral to the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

### What support is there?

The RCN has worked with the Department of Health to produce a range of resources to help nurses and midwives feel equipped and confident to deal with cases of FGM. This includes quick guidance for professionals, flowcharts of suggested action, training slides, posters and video interviews. You can access these at <http://tinyurl.com/nvx87jy>. The RCN also has its own online and hardcopy resources available for members. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk) and search for FGM.

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# Giving something back

RCN Deputy President Rod Thomson talks to Kim Scott about his first year in the role and how he hopes to use his influence to make progress for frontline nursing staff



*I feel a sense of responsibility to represent members' views*

It's been a busy 12 months for Rod Thomson, the RCN's Deputy President. Elected by members around this time last year, he sees the role as an opportunity to use his skills and experience to support frontline nursing staff.

"It's payback time for me," he says. "I'm at a stage in my career where I'm able to return some of the professional help I've benefitted from through my involvement with the RCN. I've been very lucky to have nursing mentors who have given their time, knowledge and support freely and generously. This is my way of repaying that debt of gratitude."

Rod, who is now Director of Public Health for Shropshire, has long been an active member of the RCN. He first became a safety representative in 1986 and went on to help set up the College's first professional forum for health visitors. As time passed he became

increasingly involved in the running of Congress, the RCN's annual member event, serving four years on the committee that shapes the agenda, then later being elected Vice Chair then Chair of the event.

"Both these roles were a great joy and privilege," he reflects. "I loved the interaction with our members and I was so proud to help shape the debate. Congress is such a good event for our profession."

## A voice for nursing

Now, however, Rod's focus has shifted. He wants to use his influence as Deputy President of the RCN and the contacts he has through his day job to progress the national nursing agenda. "I regularly meet with politicians, senior civil servants and nurse leaders as part of my professional role," adds Rod. "I can turn that exchange into something of use to RCN members by being a

strong voice for nursing staff. I have opportunities to influence that the average ward sister might not get so I feel a sense of responsibility to represent members' views and speak on their behalf."

Though now employed by a local authority, Rod remains fiercely defensive of the NHS. Describing his transfer out of the service as an "extremely hurtful time", he feels the NHS is in his blood. "I've had the good fortune to see different health services all over the world, and although they have their merits, I still believe the NHS is a great model of providing care," he says.

In fact the role of Deputy President has allowed him to see examples of some of the best nursing care both inside and outside the NHS. He helped judge the RCN Nurse of the Year Awards in Northern Ireland and Wales (see page 4) and has been "completely inspired" by the innovation, commitment and professionalism of members working in a huge range of different environments.

Among his priorities for the year ahead is challenging the proposed cuts to public health funding and making the Government realise the false economy of reducing resources to help keep people out of hospital. "Cutting public health budgets is ludicrously shortsighted," Rod concludes. "Not only will people suffer preventable ill health due to poor access to public health services, but health inequalities will also widen, leading to increased demand on the NHS and social care."

Find out more about Rod at [www.rcn.org.uk/rod\\_thomson](http://www.rcn.org.uk/rod_thomson) or email him at [rod.thomson@rcn.org.uk](mailto:rod.thomson@rcn.org.uk)

## Suffering in silence



RCN survey shows new parents too afraid to seek help for treatment of depression and anxiety

Nurse and midwife members are calling for greater awareness of mental health during and after pregnancy as an RCN survey reveals new parents are experiencing

depression and anxiety without professional support because they're scared to seek help.

The survey of 2,000 new mothers and fathers found that 41 per cent experienced anxiety, depression or another mental health issue during or after the pregnancy of their first child. Less than half of these considered seeking help from a health care professional. More than a quarter of those who didn't seek support explained they were "too afraid".

Carmel Bagness, RCN Professional Lead for Midwifery and Women's Health, says: "There is still a stigma around mental health which must be addressed, but this stigma is even more pervasive when it comes to parents. Too many worry that going through depression or anxiety means they will be deemed unfit parents, and this can be a hugely



*Too many worry they will be deemed unfit parents*

Join the RCN Midwifery Forum at [www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums)

damaging – and incorrect – assumption which is putting lives at risk and preventing people getting the support they deserve."

The survey also reveals 27 per cent of fathers experienced depression or anxiety during or after the pregnancy, revealing an area of mental health which is less well understood. Men are less likely than women to seek support, but 64 per cent of fathers said they were not asked about their mental health at all during their partner's pregnancy.

Carmel believes all health care staff should be aware of the importance of the mental health of mothers and fathers and that employers should provide training to ensure every member of staff knows how to talk about these issues. "Too many women and men are suffering in silence because of outdated stigmas," she adds.

## Transforming care

There needs to be greater investment in learning disability nursing if new plans to deliver care in the community are to succeed, says the RCN

A new government plan to deliver care for people with learning disabilities in the community rather than in residential hospitals is being developed in England. It means that by 2020, the number of people with learning disabilities living in inpatient units will be halved.

Ann Norman, RCN Professional Lead for Learning Disability Nursing, says: "Hopefully people will get a better quality of life. It's

not just about health needs, it's about making sure people with learning disabilities have the same rights as anyone else in society."

The Government's renewed pledge to transfer people with learning disabilities out of hospitals was prompted by the Winterbourne View scandal in 2011. A BBC *Panorama* programme exposed abuse of patients at the residential hospital in Bristol.

Under the new plans, hospital units will be closed and £45 million will be invested to shift care into community services within the next three years.

"Nurses are critical to this plan being a success," says Ann. "They have a unique role in health facilitation, are naturally able to understand and communicate people's needs and have a much greater depth of understanding for the people they care for.

"This will be a significant challenge given the very limited number of skilled learning disability (LD) nurses within the existing workforce. Quite simply we need much greater investment in LD nursing to effect real and positive changes and better outcomes for people on the receiving end of care."



*Nurses are critical to this plan being a success*

Get involved in the conversation by joining the RCN Learning Disability Nursing Forum at [www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums)

## Public health impact

Throughout the course of this year the RCN has been leading work to assess the impact and contribution that nurses make to public health. An online survey was sent to commissioners and designers of public health services to gauge the perceived value of nurses in this area.

Respondents highlighted the benefits of nurses' local knowledge, research and communication skills, and compassion, among other things. They also mentioned barriers to nurses' involvement in services, including a lack of training among some nurses and a lack of knowledge among some commissioners of where nurses could contribute.

Following the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with some of the respondents. They said nurses are well placed to give public health messages and are often seen as more approachable than other health care professionals. They reiterated that local knowledge is important but expressed fears that organisational restructuring may move nurses' bases away from the communities they work with.

The RCN is now developing a series of case studies to showcase the diversity of nursing's contribution to public health. More information will follow in 2016.

## Your help needed

RCN Mental Health Forum member Mark Haddad wants fellow members to help improve the management of diabetes for patients with severe mental illness by filling in a simple survey.

Mark, who is working with colleagues at City University London in researching the topic, said: "People with severe mental illnesses (SMI) such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depressive psychosis have a greatly increased risk of experiencing physical ill health than the general population. Intervening to reduce and prevent physical health problems is an important area for all health professionals engaged with the care of people with SMI. Many conditions can be addressed by improved access to preventive and health promotion activities."



▶ To complete the questionnaire go to <https://goo.gl/hMYIeO>

## Looked after children

The RCN has called for clinical commissioning groups in England to employ designated nurses for looked after children to improve their health outcomes. In a recently published position statement, the College said the designated role should be a strategic post with no responsibilities for individual children or young people. It should be separate from the named nurse role and have a different post holder. Download the statement from [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)

## Updated guidance

Nursing staff must respect a woman's right to choose how to dispose of the remains of her pregnancy, according to updated RCN guidance. *Managing the Disposal of Pregnancy Remains* stresses that the three options of cremation, burial and sensitive incineration must be communicated and the wishes of the woman's partner should be considered, where appropriate. No assumptions should be made based on a woman's cultural or religious background. Download the guidance from [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)

## CYP resources

Two new online resources have been developed to help health professionals who work with children and young people. Paediatric Care Online will offer immediate access to evidence-based information, helping to inform decisions at the point of care. It will be available by annual subscription from January 2016. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/pq3buz>. Meds IQ is designed to address medication errors affecting children and young people. It's freely accessible at <http://tinyurl.com/py2z3y7>.

## What I'm thinking

Victoria Sharman  
Mental Health Forum



I attended the RCN Women's Health Forum conference last month. Although I'm a registered mental nurse the issues affecting women's health are still relevant to my practice.

During the day, two themes emerged; women are still uncomfortable talking about these health issues and they have a significant impact upon their mental health and quality of life.

Embarrassment and fear is leading to a delay in women seeking treatment which is then made worse by the length of time it can take to obtain a diagnosis. Experiences of anxiety and depression are sadly common.

Attending this conference roused my professional curiosity and it will enable me to better support the women I work with. Physical health has often been neglected for mental health service users, so now I feel I can talk to the women about these issues with more confidence and help them obtain the right support and treatment.

[www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums)

## RCN Education Forum international conference

Tuesday 15 – Wednesday 16 March  
The International Centre, St Quentin Gate, Telford, Shropshire TF3 4JH

Discover the latest evidence regarding teaching and learning for practice at this international conference and exhibition. Hear the views of eminent keynote speakers exploring the current and future face of nursing education. Attend to join in the debate, share experiences and network with colleagues. By doing so, you'll help shape the delivery of high quality nursing education both in the UK and across the globe.



To keep updated on the programme and to book your place, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/ED16](http://www.rcn.org.uk/ED16)

### Northern Ireland

[www.rcn.org.uk/northernireland](http://www.rcn.org.uk/northernireland)

#### Belfast

Wednesday 16 December, 2-4.30pm  
RCN Northern Ireland HQ, 17 Windsor Avenue, Belfast BT9 6EE

*Positive and Proactive Care: Reducing the Need for Restrictive Interventions*

A seminar run by the RCN Northern Ireland Learning Disability Network. For more information email [cst@rcn.org.uk](mailto:cst@rcn.org.uk)

### Scotland

[www.rcn.org.uk/scotland](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland)

#### Inverness

Thursday 3 December, 3-5pm  
Lecture Theatre, Centre for Health Science, Old Perth Road, Inverness IV2 3JH

*North Highland Branch AGM*  
All members welcome. Your local RCN officer will attend to answer questions. For more information contact Michelle Beattie, branch secretary, at [michelle.beattie@stir.ac.uk](mailto:michelle.beattie@stir.ac.uk)

### Wales

[www.rcn.org.uk/wales](http://www.rcn.org.uk/wales)

#### Carmarthen

Friday 29 January  
The National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne SA32 8HG

Two RCN Wales seminars. In the morning, *Child Development*. In the afternoon, *Child Mental and Emotional Health*  
For an application form or more information contact Rhona Workman on 02920 680713 or email [rhona.workman@rcn.org.uk](mailto:rhona.workman@rcn.org.uk)

### East Midlands

[www.rcn.org.uk/eastmidlands](http://www.rcn.org.uk/eastmidlands)

#### Boston

Wednesday 20 January, 7pm  
Committee Room 1, Pilgrim Hospital, Sibsey Road, Boston, Lincolnshire PE21 9QS  
*RCN South Lincolnshire branch meeting*  
All members welcome.

### Eastern

[www.rcn.org.uk/eastern](http://www.rcn.org.uk/eastern)

#### Godmanchester

Wednesday 9 December, 11am-4pm  
Woodgreen Animal Shelter, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire PE29 2NH  
*RCN Cambridgeshire County Conference*  
There will be a session on stress resilience during the morning. To book a place or for more information contact Carole Vincent on 01284 717723 or email [carole.vincent@rcn.org.uk](mailto:carole.vincent@rcn.org.uk)

### London

[www.rcn.org.uk/london](http://www.rcn.org.uk/london)

#### London

Various dates  
Various locations  
*Autumn of Learning*  
RCN London is hosting a series of day-long educational conferences across the region. The programme aims to provide development opportunities for members at all levels, in venues chosen by the local branch networks. All the events are free to attend and venues include Cavendish Square, St Pancras Hospital, St George's Hospital, Whipps Cross Hospital and Lewisham Hospital. Registration for the events is open now at [www.rcn.org.uk/autumnoflearning](http://www.rcn.org.uk/autumnoflearning)

### North West

[www.rcn.org.uk/northwest](http://www.rcn.org.uk/northwest)

#### Manchester

Tuesday 12 January, two sessions, 10am-1pm and 2-5pm  
King's House Conference Centre, Sidney Street, Manchester M1 7HB  
*NMC revalidation event*  
Free learning event hosted by the RCN Manchester Central branch. For more information or to book your place contact RCN event registration on 02920 546460.

### Northern

[www.rcn.org.uk/northern](http://www.rcn.org.uk/northern)

#### Sunderland

Monday 7 December, 1-4pm  
RCN Northern Region office, 2nd floor, Avalon House, St Catherine's Court, Sunderland Enterprise Park SR5 3XJ  
*Retired nurses' group meeting*  
If you would like to attend, or for more information, contact Colette Ross on 0191 511 5809 or email [colette.ross@rcn.org.uk](mailto:colette.ross@rcn.org.uk)

### South East

[www.rcn.org.uk/southeast](http://www.rcn.org.uk/southeast)

#### Jersey

Thursday 28 January, two sessions, 9.30-11.30am and 12.30-2.30pm  
Jersey Hospice, Meeting Room

2, Mont Cochon, St Helier, Jersey JE2 3JB

*Learning event – Are You Revalidation Ready?*

Meet, learn and reflect at this interactive event. Both sessions are the same. All registered nurses are welcome, both RCN members and non-members. To book your place email [southhants.inbox@rcn.org](mailto:southhants.inbox@rcn.org)

### South West

[www.rcn.org.uk/northwest](http://www.rcn.org.uk/northwest)

#### Melksham

Thursday 17 December, 7pm  
Gifford's Surgery, Spa Road, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 7EA  
*RCN Wiltshire branch meeting*  
All members are welcome. The meeting's focus will be to plan branch activity for 2016. For more information email [david.joad@btinternet.com](mailto:david.joad@btinternet.com)

### West Midlands

[www.rcn.org.uk/westmidlands](http://www.rcn.org.uk/westmidlands)

#### Sutton Coldfield

Monday 7 December, 1pm  
Active Life Day Centre for the Elderly, 34 South Parade, Sutton Coldfield B72 1QY  
*Revalidation: What You Need to Know*

Revalidation is coming and this free half-day event will help you be ready. Specially arranged for nurses in the independent sector, it will show you how to demonstrate you meet the requirements of the code and are fit to practise. Open to everyone, not just RCN members, if you want to get ready for revalidation, book your place by contacting RCN events registration on 02920 546460 or email [eventsreg@rcn.org.uk](mailto:eventsreg@rcn.org.uk)

### Yorkshire and the Humber

[www.rcn.org.uk/yorkshireandhumber](http://www.rcn.org.uk/yorkshireandhumber)

#### Sheffield

Tuesday 20 January, 6pm  
Weston Park Hospital, Whitham Road, Sheffield S10 2SJ  
*RCN Sheffield branch meeting*  
Open to all branch members.