

# RCN STUDENTS

SUMMER 2016



**FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE**  
**STUDENT NURSE FUNDING P6**

Improving mentorship p8  
Mental health nursing p12  
Breaking bad news p15  
100 years of the RCN p16

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## Hello

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *RCN Students*. There's so much inside to help assist you in your studies and make you feel inspired about entering the nursing profession. On pages 10 and 11 we hear from two remarkable students who have gone above and beyond to save lives and improve patient care. There's guidance on how to maintain a portfolio on page 18 and advice on how to negotiate terms and conditions when getting a first job in the independent sector on page 21.



There's no denying this is a challenging time. It feels like the future of nurse education is under attack, with plans to overhaul student funding in England and difficulties getting enough mentors to support us on placement. In the following pages you'll find out what the RCN is doing on both of these issues.

It sounds like a cliché, but the RCN is its members. The organisation is only as strong as the students it represents so I would urge you to get involved and shout loud and clear about what you think of the Government's plans. There's still a chance for us to influence.

And there's no better time than at RCN Congress, when thousands come together to debate, learn, share experiences and seek support. If you're heading to Glasgow then you'll find out what I mean. If not, please do follow the action online and across social media. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress) to see what's said about student issues and more.

### Sylvia Duval

Student member of RCN Council  
RCN Students Committee Chair

## In this issue

**Cash strapped and struggling to make ends meet?**

Turn to page 20 to see students' top 10 tips for staying afloat.



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**Published by:** Royal College of Nursing  
20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN

**Editorial:** 020 7647 3931

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

**Publication code:** 005 654

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## Solutions to future student funding

The RCN is using members' views to suggest solutions to the way nursing students might be funded to complete their university degrees in future. It has called on the Government to halt its plans to scrap the bursary and make nursing students in England pay tuition fees from 2017. Chief Executive Janet Davies said it was time to go back to the drawing board. See pages 6-7.

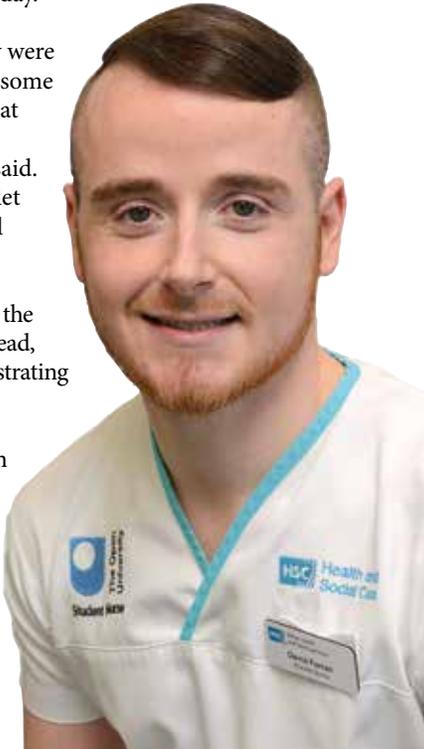
## Award-winning student

A student nurse who created a leaflet to reassure patients having skin biopsies has won the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Student Award.

Working in the dermatology outpatients department of Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital, David Ferran noticed that patients were often told they would need a skin biopsy the same day.

"I could see they were nervous and for some it was a shock that it happens so quickly," David said. "I decided a leaflet would be helpful and reassuring."

Simply designed, the leaflet is easy to read, with pictures illustrating what happens. "I thought the more information the better," said David. "I hope the leaflet will be translated into other languages, so it benefits all patients."



## Pre-reg standards and mentor role under scrutiny

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) will look at what makes a good mentor at the same time as it considers what might need to change to prepare nurses fit for the future.

It has already started its review of the skills and competencies students need to develop on their courses, with a consultation kicking off later this year. The review aims to make sure training prepares nurses to meet the health needs of an ageing population.

The RCN is working with the NMC to help shape the review.

## New role must not replace nurses



The RCN has warned that a new nursing support role in England must not replace registered nurses.

The nursing associate role aims to bridge the gap between health care assistants and graduate registered nurses.

The RCN believes the proposals provide a structure for those who wish to become registered nurses but insists degree level training is the safest way to prepare future nurses.

## Congress is here



Student nurse funding will feature strongly on the agenda at this year's RCN Congress, where members will be asked to support a resolution condemning the decision to axe bursaries and charge tuition fees.

Congress is a landmark event that sees thousands come together to debate big nursing issues, share expertise and shape RCN policy.

The SECC in Glasgow is the venue this year and Congress runs from Saturday 18 June to Wednesday 22 June. Sunday and Monday are student days and offer a chance to attend interactive sessions, meet other students and join the debating sessions.

Congress is free to attend but if you can't be there all the debates are streamed live or you can watch them on the Congress website afterwards. You can also keep up via social media and online reports.

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

## EU decide

With the EU referendum fast approaching, the RCN has produced a guide to help members decide whether to remain or leave. Although the College is not taking a formal position, it is committed to providing information on nursing issues from both sides of the debate. EU policy does impact on health service delivery in member states, said Susan Williams, RCN Senior International Adviser. "So whatever your views, make sure you have your say on 23 June." Read the guide and more about the referendum at <http://tinyurl.com/zgmjh25>

## Are you making the most of your RCN membership?

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## Get involved

The editor of *RCN Students* is always looking for contributions.

If you have a story to tell, get in touch and share your experiences with more than 40,000 nursing students. Email [studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk](mailto:studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk)



## Fighting for the future

The RCN is determined to combat controversial plans to scrap the bursary and provide viable solutions to student funding



A survey seeking members' views on alternatives to risky student funding plans has just closed. Results will inform the RCN's response to a government consultation on plans to overhaul the system of student nurse funding in England. As part of the proposals, bursaries would be scrapped and trainee nurses would pay tuition fees of up to £9,000 a year.

The survey results are still being analysed but of the 17,000 people who responded only six per cent said they agreed with the plans. The Government claims the changes will result in an extra 10,000 nurse training places but 81 per cent of members don't think mentors will have the capacity to cope with this increase. Sixty-six per cent said they wouldn't have studied nursing if they had to take out a loan and pay tuition fees.

The RCN believes the proposals should be stopped immediately while a suitable model of funding, based on sufficient evidence, is agreed upon. It has grave concerns about the impact of the plans on the future education and supply of nurses.



The Government has not thought hard enough about the risks of these proposals

Janet Davies, Chief Executive of the RCN, says: "The Government has not thought hard enough about the risks of these proposals. It hopes to increase nurse numbers but the plans aren't reflecting the realities of modern nurse training and could have the completely opposite effect.

"Nursing students' placements and longer term times mean they don't have the opportunity to earn extra money during their studies. A higher proportion are also mature students, and the prospect of taking on even more debt with a second degree will likely put off many potential nurses."

### Harmful to patient care

There is also a very real risk that the changes could harm patient care and damage the provision of comprehensive health services.

Creating a fair, effective and sustainable funding system for nursing education is absolutely critical and the RCN is committed to working with its members and the Government to identify and develop alternative ways of doing so.

### What can you do?

Despite numerous protests, petitions and debates, the Government is ploughing ahead with its plans. Its consultation on how to implement them closes on 30 June. It doesn't scrutinise whether the changes should happen just how they should work in practice. There's still time to have your say. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/gvte8gb>

## What do you think?



“My ability to support vulnerable people shouldn’t be determined by my financial position but by the compassion that brought me to the profession. Without the bursary I wouldn’t be able to study nursing. Why should I be denied a degree because I’m not a member of the financial elite?”

**Marina Down**



“These changes will create a two-tier system in an already understaffed profession. There will be those who somehow manage to go to university and those who become nursing associates. In a profession which is becoming ever more complex yet still doesn’t have the treatment or funding it deserves, the introduction of fees is surely going to alienate people further. It would be a disaster for the NHS, a disaster for patient care and a disaster for the profession as a whole.”

**Emma Clewer**



“The plans will be detrimental to nursing. By switching to a loans system we’re going to lose mature students, those with dependents and valuable experience. Suggesting these changes will offer more registered nurses is ludicrous. We don’t have the mentors or placements to allow for an influx of nursing students.”

**Rhys Mood**

### What’s happening in the devolved countries?

While the landscape of nurse funding is changing in England there are varied plans in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The Department of Health in Northern Ireland has confirmed that it has no plans to review student funding.

In Scotland the support package for student nurses is under review. Prior to the Scottish election campaign the SNP pledged to keep the student bursary. However, the level at which

the bursary will be set and other elements a support package may include won’t be decided until after the new Scottish Parliament sits.

The RCN has been closely involved with the Scottish Government review, which includes asking current student nurses for their views on what support is needed.

In Wales the bursary will remain available for student nurses with the Welsh Government telling the RCN there are no changes on the horizon.

## Improving mentorship

The RCN has a golden opportunity to influence the future of nurse education, including the all-important role of placement mentor

**W**ith nursing students spending 50 per cent of their time on placement, practice-based education is just as important as what you're taught at university. And placement mentors play a vital role in ensuring you develop the appropriate skills, attitudes and behaviours required of a registered nurse.

Current Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards require students to spend at least 40 per cent of their time on placement with a trained mentor or practice teacher. But there are difficulties. As well as a general lack of qualified mentors, some who take on the role either don't have the time to perform it effectively or have it imposed upon them.

Francesca Elner, RCN Student Committee member for Wales, says this is far from ideal. "As a student you do come across mentors who aren't really happy in the role," she says. "I've had a couple of excellent mentors who I learned a lot from, but if you get a mentor you don't get on with, or who doesn't want to do it, it's difficult."

### RCN research

The RCN has acknowledged these concerns. Last year, it carried out research into what good mentorship should look like and the findings were published in a report in January. Donna Kinnair, RCN Director of Nursing, Policy and Practice, said in the report: "The RCN is aware of, and shares, the concerns identified around the facilitation of pre-registration education in practice. We believe the skills, education and



It's time for a rethink

training of a mentor are important in ensuring that the practice placement of our nursing students supports high quality learning."

The Shape of Caring Review, published in 2015, also recommended that the RCN's mentorship project be used to inform a review of the NMC's mentorship model and standards, which date back to 2008.

Then, in April this year, the RCN hosted a summit on practice-based education in partnership with the NMC and the Council of Deans of Health (CoDH). The aim of the event, which was attended by members of the RCN Students Committee as well as nurse leaders and education commissioners, was to explore how students are currently trained on placement and consider ways of enhancing it for future students.

RCN Head of Education Anne Corrin says the summit was a significant event. "The fact we had three major organisations together in the same room and committed to working together to shape the future of nursing education is hugely significant.

"With the upcoming review of the NMC's standards, significant changes are now possible. Nursing has moved on a lot since 2008, so it's time for a rethink. The RCN, along with the NMC and the CoDH, wants to make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the future of practice-based education and mentorship."

As part of the mentorship project, the RCN also commissioned a review of systems used in other countries,



including Australia, the US and the Netherlands. The review suggested a number of models that could be introduced here.

### Higher ratios

A common theme among them is higher ratios of students to mentors, as opposed to the 1:1 model in this country. With the Government promising to create an additional 10,000 nurse training places, and with mentors already in short supply, this approach may prove necessary.

These models also incorporate tiers of mentorship, where senior students might mentor junior students while being overseen by a qualified mentor.

Francesca thinks these ideas have potential. “Peer mentoring is a fantastic idea. It would be less stressful for first-years and a good development opportunity for more senior students if they want to do it. It would have to be voluntary, though.”



Peer mentoring  
is a fantastic idea

She thinks mentors need to be encouraged to push students more. “Nursing students need to be intellectually challenged in the practice environment as well as at university,” she says. “Student doctors are always questioned on the spot, but not enough of that goes on with nursing.”

“I had one mentor who would question everything I did – what I was doing and why. Although it was daunting at first, it pushed me and I learned a lot.”

Francesca is one of two students on the steering group tasked with taking forward the outcomes of the summit – the plan is for the discussions held on the day to inform a report on the future of practice-based education.

She thinks it’s a positive sign that current students are being listened to. “The fact they’ve got students on the panel and sought our views is encouraging,” she says. “They seem to value our opinion and I’m privileged to be involved.”

Read the RCN  
mentorship  
project report  
at <http://tinyurl.com/zo9lgay>

## Answering the call of duty

Student nurse Kristian Keyte jumped into action to save the life of a woman having a heart attack late last year



It was just an ordinary evening at the theatre for 24-year-old Kristian, a student nurse from Weston-super-Mare. That was until he saw a woman in distress and helped resuscitate her mother following a cardiac arrest.

“We were waiting for the show to start when I noticed someone looking panicked a few rows in front of us,” says Kristian. “I wandered down and the lady’s mother wasn’t breathing. We got her out of the chair and started CPR for three or four minutes.”

St John’s Ambulance staff from the venue arrived with a portable defibrillator and used it once to help restart the 71-year-old’s heart. Kristian continued with chest compressions and she soon regained a pulse.

Kristian says: “I was a St John’s volunteer at the theatre from the age of 10 but this was the first time I’d been

there as a paying punter. I’ve spent thousands of hours in there but I had never had to attend to anyone before.

“As all nurses know those first few minutes are so crucial to start chest compressions. It’s one of those amazing things where statistically speaking her chances were quite limited but she defied the odds and has made a full recovery.

“I was portrayed as a hero leaping over seats to help,” says Kristian. “But I just did what any nurse would do and took responsibility to help someone in need.”



I was portrayed as a hero but I just did what any nurse would do

### Student accountability

Gill Coverdale, RCN Professional Lead for Education, says: “There may be times when you are in a position where you may not be directly accompanied by your mentor, supervisor or another registered colleague. This may happen in emergency situations, however it is vital that you recognise and stay within the limits of your competence.

“If you believe you’ve acted beyond your competence, discuss the matter as quickly as possible with your mentor or personal tutor.

“Students can seek advice and guidance on professional conduct issues from university staff, personal tutors, practice mentors or RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100.”

## Change for the better

RCN member Steffan Robbins' passion for improving care brought him a prestigious student nurse award

“Get involved in quality improvement as soon as you're able” is the advice to nursing students from Steffan Robbins, winner of the RCN in Wales Nurse of the Year Student Award in 2015. “This is how we can make real changes – working together to improve patient care and enhance practice.”

Steffan, now a qualified staff nurse in emergency care in Cardiff, is passionate about improving services in the NHS. “I thoroughly enjoy making a difference as a nurse and I'd like to take that further and change things for the better,” he says.

As a student at Bangor University, Steffan led a quality improvement programme for his fellow nursing students by running a peer guide scheme. It was this work, combined with his ideas for improving patient care, that led to him winning the award.

He says: “I was on placement on an older people's ward and I realised staff weren't always aware of how often patients needed to go to the toilet, or if they needed help in doing so. This could lead to patients being distressed and not always getting to the toilet when they needed.”

### Quick reference guide

Steffan came up with a solution that incorporated individual continence care information at a patient's bedside, including how much help they need and how often they use the toilet.

“I wanted a quick reference guide so staff can understand without looking through notes exactly what a patient needs. A sticker above someone's bed



Our expertise can make a difference to people's lives

with symbols identifies continence information for that patient, making it clear and easy to understand what they need in order to go to the toilet.”

Steffan's innovative idea is now used routinely on the ward where he did his placement and it's being trialled in other wards as well.

“It's hard as a nurse to think of changing things for the better when we're all so busy, but there is a lot of pressure to make the NHS more efficient. As nurses, we can get involved in quality improvement and our expertise can make a difference to budgets and people's lives.”



### Nominations open

Nominations for the 2016 RCN in Wales Nurse of the Year Awards are open until 24 June. A new Mentorship Award category is included for the first time this year. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/j7yfl22> for details.

## Finding my feet

Debbie Ayodele always expected her course to be challenging, but the diversity of mental health nursing came as the biggest surprise

**B**efore I started my degree people would ask what I wanted to specialise in when I embarked on my career. I would always answer “mental health nursing”. I would smile smugly, thinking I was being sufficiently specific. How wrong I was.

My first day on a rehabilitation ward was a shock. I had expected rehab to be a place of addictions, but I was on a ward full of people with schizophrenia. “Rehab exists for people with schizophrenia?” will go down as one of the silliest questions I have asked.

### Wrong perception

It was here I realised my perception of mental health was incorrect. There were people who could live with their illness in the community for the rest of their lives. It was a miracle. I didn't know a service or a world like this existed. I left the ward feeling hopeful.

I then had the opportunity to be with a community mental health team working with deaf adults, a truly valuable service. But I had never faced language barriers before and I felt powerless at my inability to communicate. Frankly, I felt left out.

One day I approached my mentor and a deaf member of staff about my feelings. The staff member said that was how he felt in the outside world, beyond the walls that protected him. I was too busy drowning in my own pity to realise this is the reality many people live every day. And I was only living it for five weeks. Here, I learnt the importance of inclusion and how isolation can feel.



I realised I was slowly becoming the nurse I knew I could be

My next placement was with older people, caring for those who had done their fair share for the world. Listening to them made me wonder what story I would tell when I was as old and wise.

For the first time in my life I was faced with a patient with dementia, the horrid disease I had heard about but never witnessed. And it tore me to pieces, more so than I could have imagined. But this was where I was able to put my compassion to the test. I would spend hours caring for people who, at the end of the day, would say “Who are you?”. That never stopped me, though. It hurt but I knew they needed me – and that their need for me to care was much more important than my need for them to remember what I did for them.

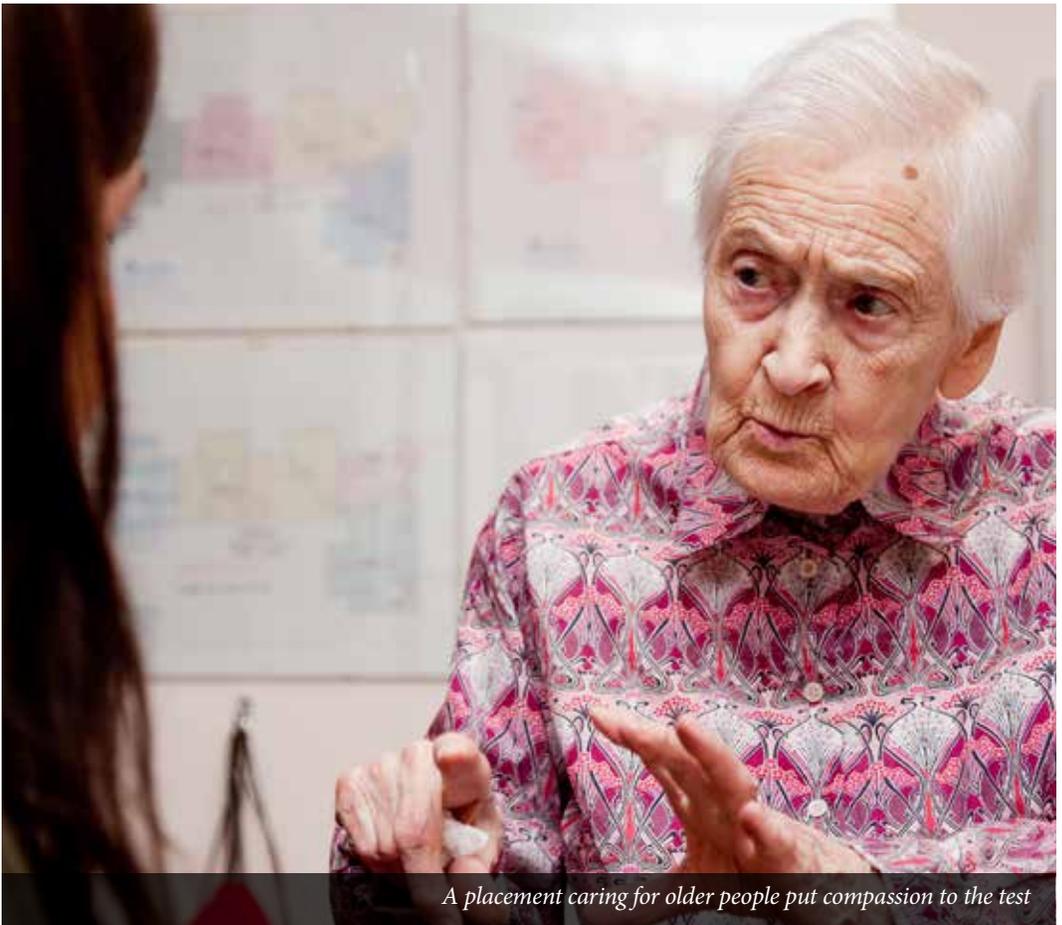
Thrown into the dynamic environment of a home treatment team I found my perfect setting. I loved every moment of assessing patients, providing care in a crisis and preventing people from being admitted to hospital. It was here I felt my skills were most applicable.

I've always loved being able to think on my feet – dealing with unexpected situations and solving them quickly. This was the environment I felt suited me most and I loved every minute. I didn't want to leave. I realised I was slowly becoming the nurse I knew I could be and had always wanted to be.

So I have six more placements and I can't describe how excited I am. If you asked me what area I wanted to specialise in right now I couldn't tell you. But come back to me in a year and a half and I might just know.

### Interested?

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



*A placement caring for older people put compassion to the test*

## Making theory come alive

Ian Hulatt, RCN Professional Lead for Mental Health, says: “Debbie demonstrates well how students need to engage with each placement in the same way they engage with their patients or clients. Acknowledge any preconceptions, then get everything you can from the experience.

“When I taught nursing students I always told them the most profound audio-visual aids are the people you care for – they enable the textbooks and theory to come alive. Every placement is a rich opportunity to learn and should be considered as such.

“Your initial reaction may be culture shock and a sense of pressure to do well, develop relationships, meet your learning outcomes. But it’s worth remembering that if it’s a disorientating experience for you, it is for the service user too. So acknowledge the challenges and allow yourself time to settle in. But maintain your critical analysis – why am I feeling this way? – so you bring curiosity and enquiry to the situation.”

## Building resilience

Newly qualified nurse Louisa Power explains how she set up a resilience workshop for fellow students while at university

**F**or Louisa Power, leadership doesn't start once you join the register, but when you first set foot at university.

Not only did Louisa help set up Glasgow Caledonian University's (GCU's) nursing society – which has grown from 17 members in 2014 to 750 today – but she also designed and implemented a resilience workshop for fellow students.

“I went on a student leaders' programme at the university and found there was nothing specific for student nurses. I thought there was a lot of potential to develop something,” she says.

“Reflecting on my own experiences as a student, ‘resilience’ was very much a buzzword, so I decided to create a workshop around it as part of a student leaders programme.”

The workshop aims to develop students' confidence and ability to adapt to challenging situations, as well as offering practical strategies to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

Louisa begins by asking students what qualities they think a resilient nurse needs, before looking at four key attributes: confidence, purposefulness, adaptability and social support.

She then encourages them to think of experiences they've had, good and bad, and analyse the emotions attached to them, before coming up with a plan for how they might deal with similar situations in the future.

But Louisa stresses the workshop is a two-way process.



“**Doing the best for your patient shouldn't be at the expense of your own mental and physical health**”

The RCN launched its *Healthy Workplace, Healthy You* campaign late last year. Find out more and access a self-care toolkit at [www.rcn.org.uk/healthy-workplace](http://www.rcn.org.uk/healthy-workplace)

“We're very much equals, learning to be resilient and supporting each other,” she says. “I don't want to just stand there talking at them, I also want to learn from their experiences. We bounce ideas off each other as a group.”

She also makes it clear that resilience does not mean putting on a brave face no matter what.

“It's not about encouraging people to grit their teeth and get through. It's not about self-sacrifice, which is how nursing is sometimes portrayed in the media but is a very old-fashioned view.

“Doing the best for your patient shouldn't be at the expense of your own mental and physical health. You have to self-care.”

Although Louisa is no longer a student at GCU, the university plans to continue running the workshop.

“It's such a great feeling to think my future colleagues may benefit from it,” she says. “It's a nice legacy and a nice way to finish my time as a student nurse.”

## Sorry to say...

Breaking bad news is never easy. Leanne Mahoney's first experience of it came two years into her training

**D**uring a placement with the colorectal team I attended a clinic appointment with my mentor, a colorectal nurse specialist, and a colorectal consultant surgeon. We were meeting 84-year-old Vera (not her real name) who was coming to the clinic to receive results from a colonoscopy.

A tumour had been found and her co-morbidities and history of myocardial infarction meant she was unfit for surgery. The plan was to remove as much of the tumour as possible via an endoscopic mucosal resection.

I was apprehensive before the meeting because I was aware of Vera's diagnosis and was worried I would get upset. I felt great sympathy for her, especially as she had attended alone. But I managed to stay composed, which I believe was determined by Vera's reaction. She appeared strong and it was only later that I became emotional.

Reflecting afterwards, what went well was the direct way the consultant broke the news. The colorectal nurse had excellent communication skills, explaining the complexity of treatment in a way Vera understood.

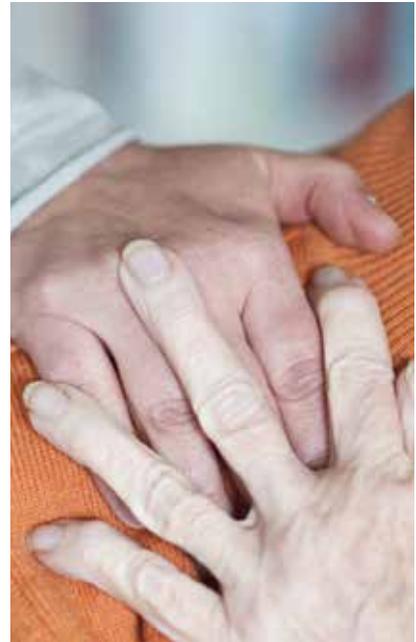
SPIKES is a protocol for breaking bad news that can ease the distress felt by the patient and health care professional. Key areas include demonstrating empathy, acknowledging and validating the patient's feelings, exploring the patient's understanding, and providing information about possible interventions.

I hope my contribution was positive for Vera. I sat next to her and placed a



I learnt the importance of being in control of my own emotions

hand on her arm to show her she was not alone. And I learnt a great deal, including the importance of being in control of my own emotions and the value of a structured approach to breaking bad news.



Read about communication in end of life care at <http://rcnendoflife.org.uk>

### Be natural

Amanda Cheesley, RCN Professional Lead for Long Term Conditions, says Leanne's account demonstrates the importance of a good role model. Her advice for students in similar situations is simply "be natural", as Leanne was in placing a hand on Vera's arm. "You shouldn't have to think about it – just be compassionate."

She stresses, too, the importance of debriefing. "You learn so much from those discussions afterwards – being able to ask questions and coming to terms with potentially distressing experiences."

## 100 years on

For the last century, the RCN has been protecting the interests of nursing students and campaigning on their behalf

**F**ormer RCN President Betty Kershaw, who was Head of Education at the RCN from 2008 until 2011, started her nurse training in 1962 at Manchester Royal. “We did three months at preliminary training school and then worked a 40-hour week, including lots of night shifts,” Betty recalls. “I remember doing a lot of cleaning, including locker rounds after visiting time was over. I lived in a nurses’ home, where the luxuries were having your own bedroom and constant hot water.”

Third year students earned £205 a year if they lived in and £330 otherwise. “That’s equivalent to £2,758 and £4,542 at today’s rates,” says Betty, who joined the RCN as a student. “There was an active RCN feeling at the hospital and students were welcome at meetings,” she says.

Among her early memories is taking part in a demonstration to promote the RCN’s *Raise the Roof* campaign, launched in 1969. “We were told to wear flat shoes as we would be marching from Cavendish Square to the House of Commons,” says Betty. Their efforts paid off, winning a 20 per cent rise in nurses’ pay – the largest single salary increase in the history of nursing.

### Valuing students

“The issue then was poor pay, but the RCN has always fought for better conditions too,” says Betty. And that includes students, says Gill Robertson, who was the RCN’s Student Adviser from 2002 to 2013. “The RCN really values its students and takes them seriously,” says Gill. “They have a key role in the College helping to make decisions at the highest level.”



*Nursing students march through London in 1948 in protest against cuts to their pay as the NHS came into being*



The RCN really values its students and takes them seriously

She remembers being involved in the last big debate about the future of bursaries in 2000, when students received non-means tested funding of £4,700 outside London. Before Project 2000 began in the early 90s, students had employee status and were salaried. But this meant that some felt they were used as cheap labour, with a lack of time for learning. “We worked hard with the Department of Health to resolve the issues,” she says.

Students’ ability to look at something with new eyes can be invaluable on the wards, Gill believes. “Sometimes staff who have been there longer have become used to less than ideal practice, so they don’t notice it anymore,” she says. “Students can be a breath of fresh air.”

If students find issues of poor practice, the RCN plays a major role in supporting them. “Sometimes they can feel scared to report something – they are new, part of a team and want to be liked, so they may not want to rock the boat,” says Gill. “But at the same time they feel compromised by something that is not right in patient care. We back them.”

### Led by members

Vice Chair of the RCN Students Committee Rhys Mood was prompted to join the RCN by one of his lecturers. Currently in his second year at York University, studying adult nursing, a lecturer asked whether anyone was planning to attend RCN Congress. “A friend and I jumped on a train to find out what it was all about and I’ve been passionate about the RCN ever since,” says Rhys, who represents Yorkshire and the Humber. He particularly values the fact that the organisation is

member-led. “The RCN tries hard to make sure students’ voices are heard, listening to students’ views and acting on the consensus,” he says.

He has strong objections to the Government’s plans to axe student bursaries. “By switching to a loans system, we are going to lose more mature students, those with dependents and valuable experience,” says Rhys. “The change lacks insight into the effort that goes into becoming a registered nurse. I think it will be detrimental to the profession and prospective applicants.”



### Key dates

- 1922 – The RCN library is established, free to all nursing students
- 1925 – The RCN Student Nurses Association is launched
- 1944 – Princess Elizabeth becomes President of the Student Nurses Association
- 1962 – The RCN launches its first public pay campaign
- 1968 – RCN membership is opened up to nursing students, with students able to become full members for the first time
- 1977 – The RCN becomes a trade union
- 1979 – Student members are given limited voting rights in RCN elections
- Early 90s – Project 2000 dramatically alters nurse training, moving education into universities
- 1994 – The RCN supports degree level nursing education, with nursing as an all-graduate profession
- 2013 – All new nurses must be educated to degree level.



## Where's the evidence?

To prove your continued ability to practise safely after you qualify you'll need to maintain a portfolio. Here's how

If you're approaching the end of your time as a student and looking forward to becoming a registered nurse, it's essential you're up to speed with revalidation.

Gill Coverdale, RCN Professional Lead for Education Standards and Professional Development, says: "The purpose of revalidation is to improve public protection by making sure you remain fit to practise. It encourages you to incorporate the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) code in your day-to-day practice and personal development."

A key part of the revalidation process is maintaining a portfolio.

### What is a revalidation portfolio?

Somewhere to store evidence that you've met the necessary requirements to remain on the NMC register. You'll need to revalidate once every three years.

### Why will I need to keep one?

To help in the process of confirming your fitness to practise. The NMC may ask to see your portfolio to verify the declarations you make as part of your revalidation application. It will also help you by demonstrating your transferable knowledge and skills.

### How should the information be stored?

You can decide – paper-based or electronic.

### What should I include?

See NMC guidance for specific details and templates but essentially the evidence that shows you've completed 450 practice hours, 35 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) and five written reflections.



You should also describe how you have used feedback to improve your practice.

### Does patient confidentiality apply?

Yes. The NMC is clear that your evidence should not include any information that might identify an individual, including names, the date of any incident referred to or the ward or place where the event occurred.

### Where can I find out more?

At [www.rcn.org.uk/revalidation](http://www.rcn.org.uk/revalidation) or on the NMC website: [www.nmc.org.uk](http://www.nmc.org.uk)

### Revalidation made simple

The RCN's publishing company, RCNi, offers an online portfolio free to subscribers. Created in line with NMC guidance, the RCNi Portfolio enables users to log CPD evidence, practice hours and reflective accounts easily. [www.rcni.com/portfolio](http://www.rcni.com/portfolio)



## Stay the course

The demands of your degree can feel overwhelming. Senior RCN Officer Sue Huggins gives her top tips for study success

**Make a plan** for studying which suits you and your lifestyle. Try to be consistent to reinforce good habits, but allow flexibility so that you can adjust if an emergency comes up. Stick with it, and reward yourself when you do.

**Take notes** if your lecturer refers to certain aspects in a book – they are highlighting these for a reason.

**Create flashcards.** They're a quick and easy way to quiz yourself right up until test day, and you can take them anywhere.

**Compare notes.** It's possible that your classmates have information you didn't catch and vice versa.

**Stay informed.** Attending class is important. You never know if a question asked by a fellow classmate or a piece of information not found in the book might be found on the next assessment or exam.

**Don't be afraid** to ask questions.

**Keep in touch** with your lecturer or placement facilitator even if on placement. Visit during office hours, send an email, or talk by phone – they are there to advise and support you to get the most out of your course.

**Stay safe on social media.** Don't discuss anything about your work or study (including placement, patients, manager or mentor) on Facebook or other social media sites. Your conduct online could jeopardise your ability to complete the course or register as a nurse if it calls your fitness to practise into question.

**Drink water and eat well.** Looking after yourself is important to keep up your energy levels and concentration.

**Join or stay a member of the RCN.** We can help you develop and learn through numerous resources, including the RCN Learning Zone – our web-based development tool. We also host Europe's largest nursing library and e-library and offer more than 700 clinical publications free of charge to download. Plus you can access online databases, such as the British Nursing Index, through us.



## Savings advice for the cash strapped

Students suggest simple ways to cut back as part of revised money saving guidance from the RCN

**1** Get a young person's railcard if you spend more than £72 a year on rail travel. All full-time students are eligible, regardless of age.

**2** Check out sites such as [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) for free furniture, kitchenware and bikes. You could save loads.

**3** Check out savings and deals on RCNXtra ([www.rcn.org.uk/xtra](http://www.rcn.org.uk/xtra)) and always flash your NUS card when buying from high street shops. Most offer student discounts, but this isn't always promoted.

**4** Make sure your supermarket shop is the cheapest by using [www.mysupermarket.com](http://www.mysupermarket.com), better still, try using your local butchers and market where you should always ask for a student discount. And take a packed lunch and flask to university – you'll save a small fortune and probably eat better.

**5** Use the RCN library ([www.rcn.org.uk/library](http://www.rcn.org.uk/library)) or online materials instead of buying text books. Or if you do buy them, try advertising on university noticeboards to buy second-hand copies (making sure they're the edition you need).

**6** Don't always get drawn into "rounds" in the pub. If you're leaving early or intend to take it easy – then just say so. No-one will mind, and you'll probably find that if you make the first move, more of your friends will admit they'd rather buy their own drinks too.



**7** Don't take credit cards with you on a night out or on a shopping trip. The impulse to overspend can be a strong one, especially after a few drinks. Take the temptation away by only taking out what you intend to spend.

**8** Try ethical shopping and get a bargain too. If you can't face afternoons traipsing around second-hand shops, try [www.oxfam.org.uk/shop](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop) for online shopping options.

**9** Swap shop parties are a great idea for a cheap night in. Tired of your wardrobe or computer games? Why not organise a night in at one of your houses? Everyone brings a bottle and a plate of food and at least three "themed" items to swap.

**10** Cook together. Draw up a cooking rota and set a weekly budget. That way, you'll not only have more time for study – because you'll only be cooking a few times a week – but as a household you will save money from buying in bulk. Try and shop together, and stick to simple meals that you all like.

The revised *RCN Student Money Guide* will be launched soon. Search for it at [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)

## A buyer's market

Starting out as a registered nurse might not involve a role in the NHS. Follow these tips to secure the right terms and conditions

Your first job after qualifying is a time to consolidate and find your feet in a demanding yet richly rewarding profession. But don't forget that although you may feel you have limited experience, to your prospective employer you're a valuable asset. And if your job offer comes from a general practice or an independent sector provider you may be able to negotiate your employment package.

### What are you worth?

Kathryn Yates, RCN Professional Lead for Primary, Community and Integrated Care, says remember how hard you've worked to get this far. "You're motivated, enthusiastic and creative. Don't undersell yourself – employers want and need you."

### Research the market

When you get a job offer, do your homework. Start with the RCN publication *Fair Pay in the Independent Sector*, available online. Consider the detail of the terms and conditions you've been offered. How do they compare with other employers? RCN Direct can advise: 0345 772 6100.

### More than money

Look beyond the salary, Kathryn suggests. "Consider the whole employment package – working hours, overtime, annual leave, study leave, shift patterns. Look at the induction, training, preceptorship and development opportunities."

### Negotiate

In the independent sector it's a buyer's market, says RCN Employment Relations Adviser Clare Jacobs. "We know that some companies are increasing salaries massively to attract



**Don't undersell yourself – employers want and need you**

nurses. "The flip side may be less support than you would find as a newly qualified nurse in the NHS. But the bottom line is that your job should offer fair pay and good terms and conditions. Be confident but courteous when you negotiate and look online for tips.

### Decide what you want

Having weighed up the terms, hours, salary and everything else, career decisions sometimes come down to gut feelings. "Ultimately," says Kathryn, "the choice is simple: is this job right for you?" It may not be where you see yourself – it may simply be a stepping stone – but you have to feel comfortable and content, and the role should help you develop. If you don't think it will do that, you may want to look elsewhere. But remember – don't undersell yourself.

## Standing up for students

The newest student member of RCN Council, Kathryn Davies, describes her journey into nursing and student activism

To say Kathryn comes from a nursing background is something of an understatement.

Both parents, her sister, grandmother and aunt are all nurses, so it's fair to say nursing has been a part of her life for as long as she can remember.

"Nursing has always had a strong presence in my family," she says. "One of my earliest memories is of my parents doing opposite day and night shifts. I remember them going off to work in their uniforms and telling me stories about their jobs, and thinking 'I'd like to do that one day.'"

But while it's no surprise Kathryn has ended up doing a nursing degree, she's also gained experience in other health care roles.

She worked as a health care assistant (HCA) at an army medical centre in Germany between 2003 and 2006, while her then partner was stationed there with the armed forces.

### A call to nurse

Later, having returned to the UK, she studied to become an operating department practitioner (ODP) and worked as an anaesthetist's assistant at Southampton General Hospital.

But she always sensed nursing was where her future really lay.

"I enjoyed being an ODP, but I always felt something was missing," she says. "I was mostly caring for people who were asleep and I wanted to engage with patients more."



“I was astounded by the passion people have for nursing”

So, following in her family's footsteps, Kathryn went into nursing. She started her degree at Surrey University in 2013, first becoming involved with the RCN as a student information officer (SIO) last year. This led to her attending RCN Congress 2015 in Bournemouth, which had a massive impact on her.

"I was astounded by the passion people have for nursing and what the RCN can do for the profession. It made me want to get involved and pushed me to stand for Council."

After triumphing in the Council elections, Kathryn started her two-year term in January. She's passionate about using her position to continue to fight against the Government's removal of student bursaries.

"Nurse training is hard enough as it is without having to finance the entire course as well. I personally wouldn't have been able to do my training if I didn't have a bursary, so I want to do everything I can to help future nursing students."

## Your RCN Students Committee

Helping to shape the nursing education agenda and RCN policy

### STUDENT MEMBERS OF COUNCIL



**Sylvia Duval**  
(Committee Chair)



**Kathryn Davies**

### COUNTRY AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES



**Charlotte Callow**  
Eastern



**Stephen McKenna**  
Northern Ireland



**Francesca Elner**  
Wales



**Laura Sowerby**  
East Midlands



**Gareth McLean**  
North West



**Stephanie Morris**  
Wales



**Hannah Doyle**  
London



**Katie Douglas**  
Scotland



**David Morgan**  
West Midlands



**Emillie Miller**  
Northern



**Graeme Stokes**  
South East



**Rhys Mood**  
(Committee Vice Chair)  
Yorkshire & The Humber



**Joleen McKee**  
Northern Ireland



**Colin Revell**  
South West

Contact your representative via [students@rcn.org.uk](mailto:students@rcn.org.uk) or visit <http://tinyurl.com/rcn-studentscommittee>

## Get involved

The RCN Students Committee is run by students for students, and campaigns on issues that matter to you.

If you are based in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, or the London, Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands, North West or South East regions, why not get involved and stand for election this year? The closing date for nominations is Friday 30 September 2016. Elections will take place in the autumn.

Nursing students are also represented at the RCN top table – on RCN Council. Look out for information on standing for a student seat at Council for the term of office 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2018. The closing date for nominations is 4.30pm on Monday 3 October 2016.

For more information visit [www.rcn.org.uk/elections](http://www.rcn.org.uk/elections)

# Celebrating 100 years of the RCN

## A YEAR OF ACTION

In 2016 we will be fighting for students as we have since the Nursing Students Association was formed in 1925. Join us as we take a stand against government proposals to replace student bursaries and introduce tuition fees in England. You are the future of the nursing profession – make your views heard.



RCN100  
@rcn.org.uk

#RCN100



## A YEAR OF PARTICIPATION

This is your centenary celebration. Throughout the year we are running a range of prize draws for items donated to the College by organisations who want to say thank you to nursing staff. There'll also be £100 worth of RCNXtra WoWPoints to win each month. You've got to be in it to win it!

## A YEAR OF INSPIRATION

The RCN's photography competition, *Care on Camera*, launched in collaboration with the Royal Photographic Society, has created a record of nursing in 2016.

Take a look at your profession and see how the photographs reflect everyday care in the touring exhibition in public buildings across the UK.



Picture by Sam Ivin