

# RCN HEALTH+ CARE

FOR HEALTH CARE SUPPORT WORKERS ACROSS THE UK

AUTUMN 2017



**CARING'S IN HIS BLOOD**  
MEET THE HCA OF THE YEAR P8

UK round-up p4  
Scrap the Cap p6  
Modern slavery p10  
Money matters p11

# Cap the cost



Being savvy with the household spend? We can help you save money on everything from your groceries and TV package to your washing machine and furniture. You could recoup the cost of your first year's membership using a Sainsbury's reloadable shopping card for your monthly grocery shop\*.

RCNXtra is already part of your RCN membership so activate your account and start saving today!

*Xtra benefits. Xtra easy.*  
Register now at [www.rcn.org.uk/xtra](http://www.rcn.org.uk/xtra)



\*Receive a 5% discount each time you top up your card. You could save £50 over four months if you top up £250/month.

## Hello

**W**hat a summer it's been for the RCN and its members. Across the length and breadth of the UK we've spent the past three months letting the Government know, in no uncertain terms, that the 1% cap on public sector pay must be scrapped.



It's been great seeing RCN members, family and friends come together to speak up for health care staff at rallies, protests and other events. The Scrap the Cap campaign has caught the attention of the media and we've had a lot of support from the public as well, which has been really positive.

But we need to keep the momentum going. On 6 September the RCN will hold its largest ever rally in central London as the Summer of Protest comes to a head. I urge you to attend if you can, and the RCN will even pay for your travel. If you can't make it in person you can still play a part via social media – see page 5 for more information.

Did you know each member of the RCN HP Committee is responsible for coordinating a local network in their country or region? It's all very well us sitting around the table as a committee and talking to each other, but unless we're out there talking to members on the ground we won't be on top of the different issues affecting you. So why not get in touch with your local representative? If you're not sure who that is you can find out on page 15.

For now, I'll leave you to enjoy the rest of this issue of *RCN Health+Care*.

**Brian Murphy**  
Chair, RCN HP Committee  
RCN HP Member of Council



## Story to tell?

The editor is always keen to hear from HCAs, APs and HCSWs about their experiences at work. So if you've got a story to share, or there's a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue, why not get in touch? Email [bulletin@rcn.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@rcn.org.uk) with "Health+Care" in the subject line.

## Contents

|                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| UK round-up         | 4-5   |
| Scrap the Cap       | 6-7   |
| HCA of the year     | 8-9   |
| Modern slavery      | 10    |
| Money advice        | 11    |
| Working for the RCN | 12    |
| A day in the life   | 13    |
| Your HP committee   | 14-15 |

## RCN Direct

If you need RCN help or advice, please call RCN Direct on **0345 772 6100** (or **00 44 20 7647 3456** from overseas).

Lines are available 8.30am-8.30pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Get help online at [www.rcn.org.uk/direct](http://www.rcn.org.uk/direct)

**Editor:** Tom Metcalf  
**Production:** Mark Kalaher  
**Design:** Susan Rentoul

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

**T:** 020 7647 3933  
**W:** [www.rcn.org.uk/hca](http://www.rcn.org.uk/hca)  
**E:** [bulletin@rcn.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@rcn.org.uk)

**Publication code:** 006360

**Cover image:** Ian Southerin

Please note throughout the magazine we use the abbreviations HCA (health care assistant), AP (assistant practitioner), and HCSW (health care support worker) to cover all those in health care support worker roles. Health Practitioner (HP) is a term specifically used by the RCN to describe the committee representing HCAs, APs and HCSWs.

## Simply the best

For the first time ever, this year's winner and runner up in the RCN Safety Representative of the Year awards were both HCSWs.

Winner Richard Gardner (pictured) from the Eastern region identifies areas that impact on staff wellbeing, such as the office environment, and advocates on behalf of staff to improve their working lives. He has shown a healthy workplace is also a safe and secure place to work.

Runner up Stephanie Watson from the Northern region has only been a safety rep for a short time but has already set up drop-in surgeries to provide tailored support for members. She uses the RCN *Healthy Workplace, Healthy You* toolkit to attract new members.

In Northern Ireland, two health care support workers were recognised for their excellence in the



RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year awards. Ciaran McGowan said it was a real privilege to have won the HCSW category. "After 17 years working as a care assistant it makes me really proud to know that I am making a difference to my colleagues, residents and families," he added.

Ann Gregg, a dementia champion, was named runner-up for her dedication to putting patients first.

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

## Take note and vote



HP members are encouraged to vote for their representative on a new RCN committee that will shape the College's trade union work.

The candidates for the HP seat on the RCN Trade Union Committee are Tom Palin, Terry Gammell and Karen Pike

Voting opens on Monday 4 September – for more information on the candidates and to cast your vote visit

[www.ersvotes.com/rcntuc17](http://www.ersvotes.com/rcntuc17)

Nominations for the RCN Professional Nursing Committee, which will lead the College's professional work, have now closed – keep an eye on [www.ersvotes.com/rcnpi17](http://www.ersvotes.com/rcnpi17) for candidate details, which will be published on Tuesday 12 September.

## Practice makes perfect

Development of HCSW, apprenticeship and nursing associate career pathways has been singled out as a key to England's future practice nursing workforce.

Providing opportunities for support worker progression is one of the steps in NHS England's ten point action plan for general practice nursing.

The RCN's Professional Lead for Primary & Community Care Kathryn Yates said: "With large numbers of the workforce set to retire in the next few years, we can ill afford to delay implementing the recommendations on making general practice an attractive career.

"As part of this it's essential we develop consistent career pathways for health care support workers. It's also essential that health care support workers are engaged and involved in the plan's implementation.

"We need to prioritise general practice and make it the 'place to be'."

# Scrap the Cap

The RCN's Summer of Protest comes to a climax next week with the College holding its biggest ever rally in central London.

The rally, which takes place on Wednesday 6 September in Parliament Square, opposite Parliament, will see thousands of RCN members and their family, friends and supporters come together to demand an end to the 1% cap on nursing pay.

It's not too late to come along – register your interest and apply for funding to attend at [www.rcn.org.uk/pay-rally](http://www.rcn.org.uk/pay-rally)

And if you can't make it in person, you can follow all the action via social media on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Over the past three months the RCN's HCA and AP members have been heavily involved in the Summer of Protest, attending events across the UK to spread the Scrap the Cap message. Turn to page 6–7 for a snapshot of what's been happening.



## Facebook families



Keep up to date with what the RCN's doing to support you by joining the RCN HP Facebook group.

The group is run by the RCN HP Committee and keeps members updated on the committee's work as well as wider RCN campaigns.

It also gives HP members from around the UK in all fields the chance to network, share best practice, troubleshoot and direct each other to information and resources. Join the group at [www.facebook.com/groups/RCNHealthPractitioners](http://www.facebook.com/groups/RCNHealthPractitioners)

Members in the Northern region can also join the RCN Northern Health Carers' Network at [www.facebook.com/groups/rcnnhcn](http://www.facebook.com/groups/rcnnhcn)

## It's all in the details

Does the RCN have your current contact details?

To make sure you receive relevant information, including any future trade union ballots, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn](http://www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn) to update your details yourself.

If you're a former HCA who is now a trainee nursing associate (TNA), you can update your profile to reflect this too.

You can also update your details by calling RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100 or emailing [membership@rcn.org.uk](mailto:membership@rcn.org.uk)

## A summer to remember

Since the RCN's Summer of Protest was announced at Congress in May, members have been making their feelings on the pay cap known at events up and down the country. Here's a snapshot of what's been happening.



### ◀ Birmingham

Members, including HCA Sarah Waters (front, centre), protest outside NHS England's regional office.

### ▶▶ London

Former Eastenders actor Maddy Hill addresses a rally opposite Downing Street (right). Jack Long (below, right), who is working as an HCA at the Royal Free Hospital while he completes his nursing degree, said: "The Government needs to wake up and realise the impact of the pay cap. We're on thin ice."





## ◀ Exeter

Adding messages to a “magic money tree” in the city centre.

## ▼ Gateshead

RCN supporters of all ages gather beneath the Angel of the North.



## ▼ Edinburgh

HP Committee Chair Brian Murphy (second from left) with RCN Scotland board members and MSPs outside the Scottish Parliament.



## ◀ Nottingham

HP Committee member Maive Coley (front, in navy blue coat) leads the rallying cry at Speaker’s Corner.



Join the RCN's largest ever rally in Parliament Square, London, on Wednesday 6 September. Find out more and get your travel costs covered at [www.rcn.org.uk/pay-rally](http://www.rcn.org.uk/pay-rally)

## Easing fears

Sophie Lowthian talks to an award winning member about the care he provides to people with learning disabilities

Understanding a person's likes and dislikes is key to reducing anxiety when taking blood, according to Cemlyn Roberts, winner of the RCN Healthcare Assistant Award 2017.

Cemlyn is based in Ruthin in north Wales, where he works in the community as a health liaison health care support worker. He provides vital support to people with learning disabilities who may be worried about the process of having blood taken.

“A lot of people with learning disabilities can be quite scared about having their blood taken – they may have had a bad experience in the past or it's too unfamiliar,” explains Cemlyn. “Our desensitisation programme gets them used to the process until it becomes a safe thing. We take it one step at a time.”

### Shaping the service

Cemlyn joined the community liaison health team in 2010, when the HCSW role was in its infancy, and helped shape the eight-week programme into what it is today.

“Lots of people were not having their blood tests but it's a powerful and important test to have, giving crucial information about a person's health. It's even more important when someone might struggle to communicate when something's wrong.”

Cemlyn now carries out the majority of blood desensitisation referrals to the team. He says there are a number of ways to help ease people's fears.

“It's important to clearly explain why a blood test is necessary and what it entails. We use flashcards with easy-read information, as well as role play. A sense of humour often comes in handy too,” he adds.

“One of the most effective ways is to get to know the person as an individual. You've got to be imaginative



and try to make it a positive experience, perhaps with things they like to watch or listen to.

“Recently one lady liked One Direction so we put them on the iPad while the needle was going in. Another time we had Fawltly Towers running. Chocolate eclairs have also worked wonders as a treat before or after the procedure. Distraction can be a very effective method as long as it's specific to the person.”

### Tailoring techniques

The tailored techniques Cemlyn uses have had a 98% success rate, resulting in a drop in the use of sedation. Not only that, but after completing the



It's empowering to know  
I'm helping people



programme, people are usually a lot less anxious about future blood tests.

So what does the future hold? As well as plans to publish his blood desensitisation work, Cemlyn hopes to expand another area of his work – a health promotion programme he has produced for men with learning disabilities. “I love my job and want to continue supporting the community to have better, healthier lives,” he says. “It’s empowering to know I’m helping people.”

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



## Cemlyn's tips for taking blood

- Make sure the person has someone they know and trust on duty.
- Easily accessible clothes such as a short sleeved blouse or shirt and a cardigan are best.
- Stress balls or spongy items can be used to squeeze while waiting to help palpitate the veins.
- Use distraction techniques such as the cough trick – ask the person to look away and cough while you stick the needle in. If they can't cough, try simple visual or verbal distraction across the other side of the room.
- Consider using coping strategies such as deep breathing.



Ann Norman, RCN Professional Lead for Learning Disability Nursing, says: “HCSWs like Cemlyn provide critical support to people with learning disabilities. It is wonderful to see he has gained the recognition for his work he so justly deserves. Once again, we are seeing the evidence of the real impact people like Cemlyn are providing. I'm delighted this year in particular we are recognising the real champions in learning disability care.”

## Your responsibility

Susan Embley finds out what the RCN is doing to make sure members know how to spot and deal with modern slavery



The number of men, women and children being trafficked and forced into modern forms of slavery is on the rise.

Although modern slavery is illegal in this country, it's estimated more than 13,000 people have been trafficked for exploitation in the UK. With one in five victims reported to have come into contact with health care services, nursing staff – and especially support workers – have a crucial role to play in spotting the signs.

“Human trafficking and modern slavery is everybody’s responsibility,” says Carmel Bagness, RCN Professional Lead for Midwifery and Women’s Health.

“Those working in health care, including HCAs and other support staff, are likely to come into contact with victims as they are on the front line and in contact with patients. It’s really important they understand the indicators and then inform the right people if they suspect anything to ensure appropriate action is taken.”

The RCN has published a pocket guide to help nursing and midwifery staff identify victims of slavery and help people find the assistance and support they need.

Signs can include someone being withdrawn or submissive when visiting a health care setting, having serious, untreated injuries or not being registered with a GP, nursery or school.

“Many people do not realise the diversity of modern slavery,” adds Carmel. “People are trafficked for all sorts of reasons; domestic work, rural work and prostitution being just some examples. This is something that is happening all around the UK and can affect anyone of any age from any background and in any community from cities to rural areas.”



### What can HCAs and APs do?

Carmel says: “Health care support workers should not try to deal with suspected cases of modern slavery on their own, especially without the appropriate training. If you think someone might be a victim, you should speak to your manager or local safeguarding team in the first instance. Under no circumstances should you raise concerns with anyone accompanying the person. Equally, don’t let concerns about challenging cultural beliefs prevent you from speaking up – with the appropriate person – if you do suspect something.”

Download the RCN pocket guide at [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications) by searching for publication number 005984.

Find out more at [www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/modern-slavery](http://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/modern-slavery)

## Money matters

Leah Williams previews a new RCN resource designed to help HCAs and APs manage their money



**W**ith pay for many health care staff falling in real terms, and living costs on the rise, there has never been a better time to re-address your relationship with money.

Becoming savvy with your spending will help you to cut costs where possible and make the most out of your pay packet each month. In tough times, even small changes can make a big difference and help reduce the stress of making ends meet.

The *RCN Money Guide for HCAs, HCSWs, APs, trainee nursing associates and nursing apprentices* will help you take charge of your finances.

RCN Senior Welfare Adviser Claire Cannings shares some of her top tips from the guide to help make your money go further:

- 1. Leave the credit card at home.** Only use credit for planned purchases, after you've had time to think about how you'll pay it off. Try to avoid taking it on nights out and shopping trips.
  - 2. Become bank-wise.** Many banks offer attractive introductory offers to tempt you to switch. Some will even give you up to £150, so it pays to check out different options. Visit [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com) for the latest deals and advice.
  - 3. Don't forget RCN perks.** As an RCN member you get access to a whole load of deals, discounts and bonus points through RCNExtra. From cinema tickets to utilities, there are many savings to be made. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/xtra](http://www.rcn.org.uk/xtra) to register at no extra cost and start saving straight away.
  - 4. Flash your staff card.** Many stores, especially independent shops, will give a discount to NHS staff so remember to show your staff card just in case.
  - 5. Avoid food waste.** In the UK we throw away £13 billion of food every year. This website has lots of great ideas for avoiding food waste, including shopping and cooking tips and recipe ideas: [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)
- For more advice on how to maximise your income download the guide at [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications) by searching for publication code 006177.

### RCN Welfare Service

The RCN is working hard to get the best deal for members, including through the Scrap the Cap campaign – find out how you can get involved on page 5. If you're struggling financially, or finding it hard to manage your money, the RCN's welfare service offers information on benefit entitlements, debt advice and more – call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100.

## Leading the way

Former HP committee member Lorraine Hicking-Woodison talks about her ground-breaking new role at the RCN

**W**hen an opportunity to work for the RCN developing resources for health care support workers came up, assistant practitioner Lorraine Hicking-Woodison didn't have to think twice.

Lorraine has been involved with the RCN for several years, including as the HP Committee member for the South East region, and so was intrigued by the chance to see it from a different angle.

As the first health care support worker to be employed by the RCN in that type of role, she was shocked and delighted when she got the job.

“It was such a fantastic opportunity,” she says. “It’s a ground-breaking role. I’ve always felt well supported by the RCN, but the staff I’ve worked with have always been registered nurses as far as I’m aware. It’s great that they’re actively looking for support workers with the potential to reach that standard.”

The main focus of Lorraine’s work is improving the RCN’s learning and development offer for HCAs and APs. She realised that while the existing First Steps e-learning tool was good for new HCAs, there was a gap in terms of what was available for more experienced support workers.

To address this, Lorraine revamped the HCAs and APs section of the RCN website, which now signposts members to a range of online resources, including tools for developing fundamental skills such as maths and English. She’s also involved in developing a digital



capabilities framework, which will identify key digital skills for support workers and how they can be developed.

Lorraine says going from RCN member to staff has given her a different perspective on the College.

“It really amazed me to see how hard everyone in the nursing department works. I was astonished when I saw how much they do,” she adds.

Access online resources at [www.rcn.org.uk/hcas-and-aps](http://www.rcn.org.uk/hcas-and-aps)

## Follow in Lorraine’s footsteps

The South East seat on the RCN HP Committee is now vacant and members are encouraged to submit applications.

The deadline is Friday 22 September and the term of office runs from 1 November 2017 to 31 December 2018 – it’s not a full term, so it’s a great opportunity to try it out to see if it’s for you.

As Lorraine says: “My involvement with the RCN has given me more confidence. When I first started I was timid and shy, but now I’m passionate and confident. If I can do it, so can you.”

Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/appointments](http://www.rcn.org.uk/appointments) for more information.

## Not ‘just’ anything

RCN member Kelly Ferranti tells Sharon Palfrey she is proud to be an HCA, and thinks others should be proud of their roles too

One evening, after a tough day at work, a taxi driver asked Kelly what she did in the hospital he'd just picked her up from. After explaining that she worked as an HCA on a surgical ward, he commented: "Oh. You're just an assistant."

Kelly admits it took all her willpower not to react negatively to the all too common misunderstanding that her job is not one that deserves respect or recognition. But she says it's hard, because so many of her peers would make the same comment themselves.

"We're not 'just' anything," she says. "While we're not always recognised, we should be, because we are the skilled eyes and ears on the wards."

Kelly has been a HCA for about 20 years and has worked for her current employer, BMI Hospitals, for about three. Working in elective surgery with oncology patients and sometimes in palliative care, her job is not for the faint-hearted, but she wouldn't have it any other way. "I love my one-to-one time with patients and I want to be there to support them," she says.

Kelly adds that working in the independent sector brings a unique set of challenges. "People who are paying



I love my one-to-one time with patients and I want to be there to support them

for their care have different expectations and staff are expected to maintain the name and reputation of the organisation they're working for. It can be hard but I work with a brilliant group of nurses and I love working with a wide range of people," she explains.

### RCN benefits

Looking to the future, Kelly says she would like to see her role develop. She's currently working on her NVQ level 5 in care management and has also recently become an RCN safety rep. It's a role she loves and she's supported by her employer who works in partnership with the RCN. She's already booked time off to go to Congress next year and represented the RCN at Nottingham Pride and during the Summer of Protest.

"I didn't know much about the College when I first joined but the RCN was central to recent pay negotiations with BMI and the benefits of membership very quickly became clear. I've already recruited some HCAs and I am keen to get the message out there about what the RCN does and that it's not just for nurses," she says.

Find out more about becoming an RCN rep at [www.rcn.org.uk/becomearep](http://www.rcn.org.uk/becomearep)

Read more about pay, terms and conditions in the independent sector at [tiny.cc/independent-sector](http://tiny.cc/independent-sector)



## A conversation with... Maive Coley, HP Committee Member for the East Midlands

### So Maive, tell us about your day job?

I'm a clinical support worker at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust neonatal unit.

### And what's the best bit about what you do?

Supporting mums and their premature babies

to get them home. It's a great feeling to wave a family off.

### What couldn't you do without at work?

My team. We have a mix of complementary skills and disciplines.

### It sounds like you have a busy time. What made you stand for the RCN HP Committee?

I wanted to work alongside the RCN learning and development team to support HCAs – who at times are undervalued.

### You've been on the committee for four years now. What's been the highlight?

The committee works as a team and we all have the same goal of looking after health care support workers in the workplace. It was great to go to Congress and meet the members we represent.

### Do you get any time to relax?

I like to read, have family time and go for walks.

### And for a treat?

I like sweet chilli Kettle Chips and watching my favourite film, *The Wizard of Oz*.

### And if you could put on your ruby slippers and click your heels?

I'd go to the Maldives!



## A conversation with... Judith Page, HP Committee Member for Wales

### So Judith, what keeps you busy?

I'm an assistant technical officer in the theatre department of Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth. I love being part of the team that tries to make people feel better.

### How did you become an

#### RCN HP Committee member?

I went to my first Congress and thoroughly enjoyed it. The following year I was approached to see if I would be a voting member on behalf of the committee. It was a great experience

and I realised how passionate they were. Time has flown since then and I've now been on the committee for three years.

### What's the best bit of being on the committee?

I enjoy our quarterly meetings, finding out what everyone has been up to in their workplace. It's great because I've made so many new friends.

### And if you could make one thing happen for HP members?

Regulation. We need to be properly valued and recognised for our skills.

### With a busy job and committee responsibilities, how do you get away from it all?

I don't really mind where I go on holiday, but I love to go away in my caravan. I have a husky cross called Tank who comes along...the clue is in the name!

# Your RCN Health Practitioner Committee

Representing the RCN's health care support worker members across the UK

The committee reports directly to RCN Council through its dedicated HP Council members and provides a platform for HCAs and APs to influence RCN policy at a UK and local level.

## HP MEMBERS OF COUNCIL



**Brian Murphy (Chair)**



**David Cardwell**

## COUNTRY AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES



**Carl Adams**  
Eastern



**Lindsay Cardwell**  
South West



**Maive Coley**  
East Midlands



**Philip White**  
West Midlands



**Tracie Culpitt**  
London



**David Burnside**  
Yorkshire & the Humber



**Kevin Morley**  
Northern



**Dennis Greer (Vice Chair)**  
Northern Ireland



**Tom Palin**  
North West



**Lorraine McLauchlan**  
Scotland



**Vacant**  
South East



**Judith Page**  
Wales

For information about the vacant South East seat, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/appointments](http://www.rcn.org.uk/appointments)

Contact your representative via [governance.support@rcn.org.uk](mailto:governance.support@rcn.org.uk)



If undelivered please return to: RCN Direct, Copse Walk, Cardiff Gate Business Park, Cardiff, CF23 8XG

**Scrap  
the cap!**



# Join thousands of RCN members for our biggest ever UK rally

**Where?** Parliament Square, London

**When?** Wednesday 6 September, 12.30-2.30pm

**Why?** To stand up for fair care for patients and fair pay for nursing staff

**How?** Sign up to attend at [www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap) – the RCN will even cover your travel costs

