

**RCN  
BULLETIN**



Royal College  
of Nursing

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ISSUE NO. 352 JUNE 2017

# FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

MAJOR CHRIS CARTER ON A NEW  
RCN DEFENCE NURSING EXHIBITION P8

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

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## RCN Foundation consultation

The Charity Commission has approved a scheme to amalgamate three funds held by the RCN Foundation. It is proposed that the RCN Housing, Benevolent and England and Wales Education funds will form two new funds known as the Benevolent Fund and the Education Fund.

The change will make it easier for the Foundation to respond to changing education and training needs and the growing numbers who need a helping hand. It will continue to recognise individual gifts made to the funds.

The RCN Foundation is consulting RCN members on the proposal. Comments or questions should be emailed to [rcnfoundation@rcn.org.uk](mailto:rcnfoundation@rcn.org.uk) by 31 July. More information is available at [www.rcnfoundation.org.uk](http://www.rcnfoundation.org.uk)

## Update your details

Last month Congress called for a ballot for industrial action should the next Government fail to end pay restraint. By law ballots must be carried out by post, so make sure your contact details are correct. Make sure you receive all the relevant news by adding a correct email address too.

Visit: [www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn](http://www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn)  
Phone: 0345 7726 100  
Email: [membership@rcn.org.uk](mailto:membership@rcn.org.uk)

## Election promises

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron have both promised to reinstate bursaries for student nurses if they are elected.

Speaking at RCN Congress in Liverpool, the politicians also pledged to scrap the pay cap and properly invest in the NHS.

“We want nurses to be paid properly,” said Mr Corbyn, adding he would respect the decisions of an independent pay review body.

In his speech Mr Farron said: “If you undervalue nurses, don’t be surprised if they leave the profession.”

Prime Minister Theresa May declined an invitation to attend Congress. An emergency resolution – that RCN Congress deplores the contempt shown in the letter from the Prime Minister for the Royal College of Nursing – was tabled in response and overwhelmingly supported by members.



🕒 Watch both speeches and the emergency resolution at [www.rcn.org.uk/congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress)

*Voters will be heading to the polls as RCN Bulletin goes to print.*

## Children’s health at risk

Cuts to crucial children’s health services are jeopardising the health of England’s children and young people.



A new RCN report shows how plummeting numbers of health visitors and school nurses and cuts to public health funding are putting children’s health at risk.

The report reveals the number of health visitors has fallen by 1,000 since 2015 when there were more than 10,000 in the NHS.

Read *The Best Start: The Future of Children’s Health* (publication code 006200) at [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)



## Don't leave staffing to chance

Making her keynote speech to Congress, RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies urged election candidates to put patients before politics.

In an address where she claimed “nursing is still the best profession” she urged politicians to consider safe staffing in light of a new RCN report revealing alarming vacancies.

“It is too dangerous to leave staffing numbers to chance,” she said. “We are calling for laws to protect the patients we care for and ensure they get the safe and high-quality care they deserve.”

The report, *Safe and Effective Staffing: the Real Picture*, revealed approximately 40,000 unfilled nurse posts in England, with 12,000 more health care support worker vacancies. Research in all four UK countries, showed four in five NHS nursing directors are worried their hospital relies on the goodwill of staff to keep services running.

Janet called for the rest of the UK to follow the example of Wales and enshrine safe staffing in law, as the College warned there are not enough registered nurses and health care support workers in the system to provide the care patients need and that the NHS already has funding for.

The RCN staffing survey, which captured member experiences over the course of a shift, has now closed. The findings will be used to help demonstrate the current situation to the public and policy makers. Find out more at [www.rcn.org.uk/safestaffing](http://www.rcn.org.uk/safestaffing)

# Summer of Protest forecasts stormy conditions

Members have called for a Summer of Protest should the next Government fail to scrap the pay cap



Results of the RCN's pay-poll revealed 91% of the members who took part would take industrial action short of strike, with 78% saying they were prepared to strike.

The unprecedented results show a real appetite for industrial action from RCN members for the first time ever.

While the turnout is not enough to mandate a formal ballot, RCN Chair of Council Michael Brown, announcing the results at Congress, said: “Getting 52,000 NHS members taking part shows the strength of feeling about pay restraint – and the percentage in favour of taking action cannot be ignored.”

Michael went on to propose an emergency resolution calling for a summer of planned protest activity, followed by an industrial action ballot, should the next UK Government continue the policy of pay restraint.

During a passionate debate delegates showed overwhelming support for the

resolution, which was passed with just two votes against and four abstentions.

Watch the debate at [www.rcn.org.uk/congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress)

### Become a pay champion

Chair of Council Michael Brown urged members to get involved in the RCN pay campaign, Nursing Counts. You can do your bit by becoming a pay champion.

Pay champions help promote the campaign by engaging their colleagues and co-ordinating activity in their areas.

It's a chance to support members to take part in local action, from speaking with MPs to holding a workplace demonstration.

If you would like to sign up visit [www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts](http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts)

# 4 DOING THE ROUNDS

## Bringing the past to life



So many have encountered nursing in their past and this box can help them share their stories

A new RCN project has been launched to help those living with dementia revisit and recall their past. The Case of Memories project uses equipment and smells from the 1950s to stimulate reminiscence among those who have had an involvement in nursing.

The initiative began after the RCN's Dementia SPACE principles project discovered many care home residents experienced nursing during the 40s and 50s, whether as a patient or as a nurse themselves. Funded by the RCN Foundation, the cases of memories include replicas of nursing items used during this period such as

thermometers, scissors, bandages, ear syringes, enamel bowls and a district nurses' bag with bag polish.

A document accompanying the case outlines the items so those presenting them can describe the contents and prompt memories. Everyone is free to handle the items and feel the texture and temperature, and many of the objects included, such as antiseptic, have evocative smells too.

RCN Professional Lead for Care of Older People and Dementia, Dawne Garrett said: "This remarkable project could make a real difference

to people living with dementia. So many have encountered nursing in their past and this box can help them to access not only their memories but also their ability to recall and share their stories.

"We hope as many nurses and carers as possible will borrow a case of memories and see the wonderful impact they can have on those living with dementia – and their families too."

Cases of memories are available for care homes to borrow free from RCN libraries in London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast. To request one contact [rcn.library@rcn.org.uk](mailto:rcn.library@rcn.org.uk)

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

## Top honours

The RCN Awards of Merit, Fellowships and Reps of the Year awards were presented to outstanding members at Congress in Liverpool.

A new Student Information Officer of the Year was also awarded for the first time. Winner Ellie Jolley was chosen for work supporting Scotland's Student Bursary Advisory Group among other achievements.

Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/renawards](http://www.rcn.org.uk/renawards) to find out more about the winners.

## More than friends

Animals have long held a role in health and this month an RCN public lecture will discuss the range of animal interventions in modern health care.

Meet Claire Guest and her dog Daisy, who detected her breast cancer, and other therapy pets on 21 June at RCN UK HQ.

To book your place at *From Protection Dogs to Therapy Pets* and find out more visit [www.rcn.org.uk/whatson](http://www.rcn.org.uk/whatson)



## The big picture

Nearly 1,500 delegates packed the hall to hear party leaders speak at Congress 2017



### MEET THE MEMBER



Each month in *RCN Bulletin* we'll be asking a member to share a little bit about themselves.

**Name:** Karen Leigh

**Role:** Community matron

**If you weren't a nurse, what would you be:** A teacher or mentor. (It would still be linked to nursing – I would want to teach and guide others.)

**What item can't you do without at work?** Car – I'm a community nurse.

**Who would play you in a film?** Halle Berry of course!

**How do you unwind?** I'm a tri-athlete so I have to be out there swimming, running or cycling to relax.

**If you could have a superpower what would it be?** To make people understand I can only do so much.

**If you could go back in time, which year would you live in?** I love the style of the 18th century, and the big skirts. I wouldn't want to live then though...

**Why did you choose this profession?** Nursing is something I have always done. I'm the youngest of six and I've always been looking after someone. It's just something that comes naturally to me.

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



## PATIENT PERSPECTIVE



In a new monthly feature, patients and their families tell us how exceptional nursing care feels. This issue, Lesley Chan explains the positive difference respiratory specialist nurse Joanna O'Toole made to her whole family

Our daughter Amelie, who has CHARGE syndrome, was looked after by Jo for about four years. She was always positive and offered unwavering comfort and support, even though Jo herself was diagnosed with secondary cancer.

Many times, Jo stayed after her shift finished to sit with my family, always providing truly personalised, compassionate care. We were never made to feel rushed. I often said: "Go home Jo, your family need you," and she always replied: "My girls are grown ups and Jim won't mind, he knows what I'm like."

I felt safe knowing that she knew our girl so well. Amélie is profoundly deaf and partially sighted and so relies on facial expression and Jo knew how to raise a giggle and bring her sense of humour out every time. She had a silly dance and wore a smile 24/7.

She used to make us all laugh, and always included Amélie's three siblings, asking about each one. The fact she could remember all the finer details of previous visits shows how well she listened and cared about the whole family.

Jo recently retired on medical advice and I don't know how we will manage without her overseeing Amélie's care. What a credit to the NHS.

**Jo won the RCNi Patient's Choice Award 2017**

ARE YOUR MEMBERSHIP DETAILS UP TO DATE?

CHECK ONLINE AT MYRCN, CALL 0345 7726 100, OR WRITE TO RCN MEMBERSHIP TEAM, COPSE WALK, CARDIFF GATE BUSINESS PARK, CARDIFF CF23 8XG.

# 6 OPINION

## WHAT I'M THINKING



### David Atherton

International nurse adviser,  
Voluntary Service Overseas

My two years working at a rural nursing college in Malawi with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) were memorable. I took a lot away from the experience, which I've been able to apply to my practice back in the UK.

I learned how to adapt my skills and understanding to a low-resource setting, managing and treating tropical diseases with limited diagnostic tools and drugs. You don't need as much as you think. In our medicalised society we often overlook the importance of things like diet and adequate rest in the healing process. Drugs are not always the key.

Volunteering abroad is easier than you think – you don't need to be Bear Grylls or have a master's in public health. There are lots of agencies which can equip and prepare you before you go, and the RCN can also help. You can maintain your NMC registration while abroad, and employers often have career break options.

I was continually surprised by what I was capable of. If I can do it, so can you.

The RCN has published *Working Internationally: A Guide to Humanitarian and Development Work for Nurses and Midwives*. Download it at [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications) by searching for publication code 005 960.

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



## What you've been saying

### People trafficking

From my own professional experience as a school nurse, I can say we health professionals have been banging this drum for many years now! We have led the fight to have these young girls and boys protected and recognised as the victims.

[Jayne McVeigh via Facebook](#)

### Designated safe places

As a mental health nurse, I totally agree that we should be working more closely with the police to assess people in their own homes and signposting them to the appropriate services or place of safety if required. A busy A&E department is not good for the individual and staff are stretched enough.

[Suzanne Walker via Facebook](#)

I currently work for a home treatment team and sometimes A&E is a life saver. If we go to see a patient at home around 8pm and they go into crisis, there is nowhere else for them to go.

So unless the government can come up with more funds to employ more nurses to open more wards, or have a bigger budget for community services then I don't see how things are going to change.

[Elenor Pinnock Johnson via Facebook](#)

### AfC banding

It's scandalous that HCSWs are paid as a band 2! They are the back bone of health care and so invaluable! None of us are paid what we are worth, but the health care assistants are bearing the biggest brunt of it.

[Kayleigh Boulton via Facebook](#)



### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

I'm afraid that it will not be possible for the Prime Minister to attend the Royal College of Nursing Congress this year."

[Letter from the Prime Minister's office which provoked condemnation from Congress](#)

### 4 THINGS TO DO IN JUNE

1. Catch up with Congress. You can watch films of all the debates and keynote speakers at [www.rcn.org.uk/congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress)
2. Shape the trade union or professional work of the RCN by nominating yourself for our new governance committees. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/elections](http://www.rcn.org.uk/elections)
3. Get to the centre of the action and sign up as a pay champion. We need your help to motivate members. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts](http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts)
4. Take part in discussions about your area of practice and network with peers by joining an RCN forum Facebook group. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums) to discover how.

### GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

The RCN Bulletin team is always looking for members to contribute to the opinion pages. If you're keen to share your views, email [bulletin@rcn.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@rcn.org.uk)

## HOT TOPIC



After calling for a Summer of Protest unless the next Government scraps the pay cap, Congress delegates got busy making their suggestions for action. The views shared here come from postcards collected at the event.

“Identify the other organisations locally that have pledged to join us and even support us with their presence.”

“Work to rule and do not complete unnecessary paperwork.”

“Take our breaks. Any missed break is a safety incident.”

“Lunchtime drop-in sessions in all trusts to highlight what we are doing and why.”

“We need to make it really public how the pay restraint is going to affect patients. Ensuring that they understand that action is not for selfish reasons.”

“Encourage members to write to the Health Minister and their local MPs.”

“As much as this is a protest on pay, let’s get out there and tell people all the ways that the Government has damaged the health of the nation – on the streets, at festivals, in campaigns. Show everyone nurses care.”

“Get the word out. Share with ten members and ask them to share with ten more people. We shall not be door mats.”

“Every local branch march to a foodbank, leave food parcels for people including nurses who depend upon donations of others.”



## Positivity please

Rebecca Jones is a third-year nursing student at Leeds Beckett University

Nursing is a great profession. But as a student nurse, I started life at university only knowing that the next three years of education and placement were going to be tiring and demanding.

Upon starting my first placement, I was often asked: “Why nursing? It’s a horrible job. It’s so stressful. You need to get out now while you can.” The majority of comments throughout my training continued to be negative.

The nurses of today are the people that students like me look up to; who they aspire to be like. Negative comments could easily change the mind of a first year student nurse. We always talk about empowering our patients but what about our future health care professionals? We should be encouraging people to become nurses, not



pushing them away from an extremely rewarding career. There needs to be more positivity and praise for our profession.

I never thought there would be an end in sight when I started my training, but I’m preparing to qualify in September and I could not be more proud of myself. I am so glad I didn’t listen to the negativity, I know I am going to make an amazing nurse. And I’m going to tell the next generation they will too.

## MESSAGE TO MEMBERS



**Janet Davies**  
RCN Chief Executive

It was fantastic to see so many of you at Congress this year, and to hear just how passionate you are about fighting for fair pay. As I write this, the outcome of the election hasn’t been decided, but no matter who the victor is, we will continue as the voice of nursing to guide, advise and where necessary protest.

Congress called on Council to ballot for industrial action if the next Government fails to end pay restraint, but that’s certainly not the only thing on our list of priorities. Our recent safe-staffing report revealed shocking numbers of vacancies. Four in five nursing directors across all four UK countries say services rely on goodwill.

We hope to work with the next Government to value, improve and invest in nursing, but we are not afraid to stand up for what we believe when the time comes. We’ll be asking you to contact your new MPs to hold them to account for any pledges they made during their campaigns. Members are also thinking ahead to a Summer of Protest to demonstrate just how fed up they are with the constant poor treatment nursing receives.

Let’s hope that 2017 actually brings us another Summer of Love, but I won’t be relaxing just yet.

Find out how you can join in the action and become a pay champion at [www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts](http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts)



# 8 FEATURES

## For Queen and country

With Armed Forces Day approaching on 24 June, the RCN is running a number of events to celebrate defence nursing over the summer. Susan Embley reports



Seeing what was in the archives really opened my eyes



Throughout history conflicts have affected the physical and mental health of service personnel and civilians. From the Crimean War in 1853, when trained nurses were first posted to a war zone, to Afghanistan in 2014, each conflict has presented a unique challenge and injury pattern. The RCN Library and Heritage Centre's current exhibition traces the historical journey of defence nursing. With medical artefacts used in early 20th century conflicts, the exhibition reveals how, although much has changed,

some equipment for use in the field has remained the same.

Chris Carter, Chair of the RCN Defence Nursing Forum, was involved in the creation of the exhibition and was fascinated with the timelessness of some of the materials used. "Seeing what the RCN has stored in its archives in Edinburgh was really interesting and opened my eyes to the diversity of the organisation," said Chris. "For example, the Florence Nightingale letters show the same kind of thoughts that

nurses delivering care in a war zone have now."

### Lessons of war

By the time of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, all UK soldiers were trained in battlefield first aid, but this wasn't always the case. First World War care on the battlefield was often provided by medical officers and orderlies with varying degrees of training. Nursing care began at casualty clearing stations before the wounded were sent through a lengthy evacuation

chain. The journey from the battlefield to base hospitals and back to Britain resulted in large numbers of avoidable deaths and injuries. It was soon learned that early intervention could save lives.

By the Second World War increasing numbers of orderlies were trained and posted to advanced first aid units. For the first time, female nurses of the British Armed Forces were sent into battle zones to provide expert care for troops. The discovery of penicillin and improvements in pre-hospital blood transfusions vastly increased survival and rehabilitation rates.

Nurses, medics and advanced surgical teams with specialist skills were



posted close to areas of operation. The development of flight nursing in the Second World War helped to speed up nursing care for reconstructive surgical procedures, prosthesis and rehabilitation.

“This exhibition is an opportunity to showcase defence nursing from a historical perspective; from what we’ve learnt and what we do now. One thing that’s the same for all nurses is delivering care with compassion in complex situations to a high standard,” added Chris.

*For Queen and Country: Nursing, Trauma and War* runs until 23 September at the RCN Library and Heritage Centre, 20 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0RN.



### Creative scribblings

As part of the exhibition, the RCN is working on a project to digitise the diaries and scrapbooks of nine women who served as nurses during the First World War. The conservation will ensure that unique fragile documents in the RCN archives can be made accessible.

Registered nurse, published poet and performer Molly Case will also be a writer in residence until September. She will provide four creative writing workshops engaging different audiences with the RCN’s First World War collections, alongside a family history research day.

Full details of the workshops and all the exhibition events can be found at [www.rcn.org.uk/whatson](http://www.rcn.org.uk/whatson)

## THE VIEW FROM HERE



### Molly Case

RCN Library and Heritage Centre writer in residence

Creativity: what is it to me and why is it important? I believe it is a way of seeing the world through a unique lens, distilling a moment into a perfect crystallised form. A way of transforming the ordinary into something memorable. It’s about discovering new stories, and beguiling ways to tell them.

In my career as a nurse I have met stedeores and painters, photographers, RAF fighter pilots and school dinner ladies. I’ve heard stories from people that have lost children, or that have so many grandchildren they couldn’t possibly name them all. I’ve listened to people take their last breaths and speak their final words, secret, sacred conversations between loved ones, but I’ve also seen how successful treatment can open up a whole new enthusiasm for life.

Nursing is one of the most reflective professions and what better way to contemplate than to pick up a pen and paper and start to write. Crafting our thoughts into something substantial helps make sense of an experience, illuminate feelings and emotions in a new way and explore all the stories wandering around in our minds. Believe me, you never know where they might take you.

Caring for others relies on good communication. Open, honest conversations about fears and anxieties, about personal motivation and aspirations, about how we came to be here in the first place.

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



# 10 FEATURES

## Leading the way

Tom Metcalf talks to an HCA using his passion, determination and writing skills to improve standards of care



Like many others, RCN member Alex Matthews\* was drawn to care work because of his desire to help others. After nearly 20 years as a language teacher he began working in a care home full-time two years ago and soon found he wanted to take a lead in improving care.

“I’ve always liked care,” he says. “Helping people is such a great feeling and I always remembered how special it was, so I wanted to get back to that.”

But when Alex started his new job, he found time pressures meant staff were often unable to deliver an appropriate level of care.

Staff were rushed off their feet,” he recalls. “We didn’t have time to talk to residents because we were moving from one to the other so quickly. Personal care was often rushed and I saw instances of rough handling, particularly of residents with dementia.”

Alex raised his concerns with management and with the Care

Quality Commission (CQC), but decided he wanted to do more to highlight poor care and help prevent it. A keen writer in his spare time, he has channelled his experiences into *She’ll Be Alright*, a training and self-study guide based on the CQC’s fundamental care standards.

He is also training to become a care manager, and has ambitions to eventually put together a team and come up with a new model of care, which can be put into practice in a real care setting and used as a blueprint for others. He already has several ideas about what this new model might look like, including a shift towards not-for-profit care homes with a focus on empowering residents.

“I’m a firm believer in encouraging people to be involved in the running of their own care as much as possible. The more we do that, the more patients and residents will feel in control of and enjoy their lives.”

\*Alex Matthews is a pen name

Dawne Garrett, RCN Professional Lead for Care of Older People and Dementia, says:

“I regularly come across inspiring RCN members delivering fantastic care for older people, both in the independent sector and NHS. Unfortunately poor care can also occur in any setting, and the RCN has produced guidance on how to raise concerns should you encounter it. But members such as Alex should be celebrated and congratulated for going above and beyond to try to achieve safe, compassionate care for all.”

[www.rcn.org.uk/raising-concerns](http://www.rcn.org.uk/raising-concerns)

### Talking points

Improving the experiences of people in care settings was a hot topic at RCN Congress last month. To watch the debates and find out more visit [www.rcn.org.uk/congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress)

### Win!

*She’ll Be Alright* is available to order from [www.pavpub.com/shell-be-alright/](http://www.pavpub.com/shell-be-alright/)

We’ve also got three copies to give away. Simply email [bulletin@rcn.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@rcn.org.uk) with your name and RCN membership number, putting *She’ll Be Alright* in the subject line, by Wednesday 21 June.



Helping people is such a great feeling



🕒 Join the RCN Older People’s forum at [www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums)

## We're only human

Martin Bromiley is urging clinical professionals to speak out to prevent avoidable deaths in health care. He told RCN Congress about his own experience of losing a loved one

In 2005, Martin's wife Elaine died during a routine operation. Her death was a direct result of medical errors, but the subsequent independent review found that while the operating theatre was well-equipped and the clinicians were technically skilled, they hadn't responded appropriately to the unanticipated emergency. Leadership was confused and there were communication problems, despite attempts to speak up by nurses present.

Martin doesn't blame the experienced staff for what happened. In fact he refers to them as the "dream team for this situation". Instead he points to their humanity and the environment in which they were working.

"The nurses there were aware of what was happening and what needed to happen," he says. "One nurse brought in a tracheostomy kit. She announced it but was ignored. Had she even been heard?"

"Another nurse got a bed lined up in intensive care but when she made others in the theatre aware of this, the reaction she got made her feel like she was being over-cautious so she cancelled it."

### Industry differences

Martin, a captain for a major UK airline, started to research the culture in health care around safety and found the NHS was a long way behind most other high risk industries.

"All the learning about human factors in aviation and other



Behaviours are checked in other industries but not in health care



Martin addresses Congress 2017

industries seemed to have reached the hospital gate and gone no further," he says.

He now campaigns for health care systems to be designed around the people using them, as happens in other industries. He also says everyone has a role in finding out why errors happen.

"In aviation we try to understand and learn. It's not just 'one of those things'. Behaviours are checked in other industries but not in health care, where the focus continues to be on what happened not why."

Frontline staff can offer an insight into the real work they have to do, he says, and he urges nursing staff to remember you can influence others.

"If an error happens, put yourself in their shoes, and ask, why did

it make sense at the time? Send back policies that aren't workable – you are giving valuable feedback as the eyes and ears of the organisation," he adds.

### Redressing the balance

The culture in health care must move away from the focus on the assumption that gross negligence, which must be addressed with sanctions, is the most likely reason for errors, Martin says. Instead, as happens in other industries, he wants more consideration given to the possibility that inadvertent human error may happen, which can be addressed in a supportive manner.

Watch "Just a routine operation" on the Clinical Human Factors Group (CHFG) website at [www.chfg.org](http://www.chfg.org)

## Patience and perseverance

Sophie Lowthian talks to RCN Nurse of the Year 2017 Melanie Davies, who has helped transform the care for people with learning disabilities in Wales



In 2011, RCN member Melanie was “horrified” after an ombudsman’s report investigating the death of a man with learning disabilities at her hospital labelled the care he received as “dire”.

Paul Ridd died at Morryston Hospital, part of Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, in January 2009. Melanie joined the hospital as a ward sister in December 2010, and took action right away.

The result was an information pack that went on to be used as the foundation for the care bundle developed for the Welsh Assembly’s 1,000 Lives campaign. It is now being promoted across NHS Wales.

“Never again on my ward, in my hospital, in my health board –

that’s what I resolved and I felt it in my heart,” says Melanie. “I have driven it and made it real. I made a promise to Paul Ridd’s family that no other patient or family would experience the poor care he sadly received.”

### Go-to person

Melanie immediately set about changing the ward culture, and soon became the hospital’s go-to person for advice. “When I started there was a lack of training in learning disabilities so we began by delivering informal sessions and it progressed from there,” she says. “It was crucial

to come together and draw on our strengths as a team. It wasn’t easy at first, but change doesn’t happen overnight. You need patience and perseverance.”

For six years, Melanie has worked tirelessly – largely in her own time – delivering training, developing resources and organising a network of learning disabilities champions. There are now 170 across the health board’s four sites.

The information pack Melanie created contains communication tools, stickers with useful contact numbers and a traffic light assessment which includes vital information about

the patient, highlighting their likes and dislikes. “It’s all about personalised care,” says Melanie.

Since Melanie started work there has been a fall in complaints related to learning disabilities, and Paul’s siblings have applauded the “fundamental change” she has led at the hospital and beyond.

So what does the future hold? Seeing learning disabilities training being made mandatory is high on Melanie’s agenda as well as working more closely with parents, carers and families. An e-learning platform is also in the pipeline.

“It’s an ongoing project,” says Melanie. “I’m immensely proud of what we’ve achieved so far but we will keep moving forward to ensure people with learning disabilities get the best possible care.”



Never again on my ward, in my hospital, in my health board.

### RCN resources for you

RCN publications *Meeting the Health Needs of People with Learning Disabilities: RCN Guidance for Nursing Staff* (pub code 005769) and *The Needs of People with Learning Disabilities: What Pre-reg Nurses Should Know* (pub code 003024) are available at [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)

### RCNi awards

Melanie also won the Learning Disability Practice Award. You can read about all the award-winning projects at [www.rcni.com/nursing-standard/features](http://www.rcni.com/nursing-standard/features)



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The Royal College of Nursing acts as an Introducer Appointed Representative to the Liverpool Victoria group of companies for General Insurance and Life Insurance.

15581-2017

## Forum activists honoured at Congress

Forum activists were recognised at this year's RCN Congress, with Chair of the RCN Public Health Forum Jason Warriner, receiving the RCN Award of Merit



Jason has held many positions within the College, including Chair of Congress, and is extremely knowledgeable about the RCN's work and ethos, especially how it benefits individuals, the profession and patient care. Working in the field of sexual health for most of his career, his clinical knowledge and experience is unsurpassed. Jason is always willing to share his knowledge and act as a mentor to colleagues. On the night he said he felt "amazing" to receive the award, the highest honour the RCN bestows for

voluntary service. "It's such an achievement and it makes me realise what a big impact my work has inside and outside the College," he added.

Three forum chairs were also presented with prestigious RCN Fellowships for their exceptional contributions to nursing or health care. Each Fellow is nominated for the award by a colleague or peer. The RCN often calls on the experience and expertise of the Fellows for help with projects, publications and events. Chair of the RCN Neuroscience Forum

Dr Sue Woodward has been involved in some of the forum's most successful events, including Congress fringe meetings, conferences and partnership working. Widely published and an accomplished speaker, Sue is also editor-in-chief of the *British Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*.

Felicia Cox has been Chair of the RCN's Pain and Palliative Care Forum for five years. As one of the country's leading nurse experts in the field, her considerable achievements include developing a knowledge and skills framework on pain; editing various specialist journals; and leading a team that won a national pain award in 2015. Felicia said: "I'm absolutely elated as this is something I never contemplated. I would like to undertake a Fellows project to raise the profile of pain assessment and management and get the topic embedded into the nursing learning curriculum as people experience pain in all care settings."

RCN's Women's Health Forum Chair Debby Holloway was described as an "inspirational leader" at the ceremony. As the first gynaecology nurse to be awarded an honorary fellowship of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Debby pushes the boundaries, showing how nurses can contribute in roles once reserved for medics.

"I am delighted to be honoured with this prestigious award," said Debby. "It's really great and unexpected to be honoured for my contribution to nursing."

Clockwise from top left: Felicia Cox, Jason Warriner, Sue Woodward and Debbie Holloway

## Forum member is first Macmillan lead nurse for specialist palliative care



Carolyn Doyle, steering committee member of the RCN Pain and Palliative Care Forum, was appointed Macmillan lead nurse for specialist palliative care last month – the first role of its kind at Barts Health NHS Trust. Carolyn said: “It’s a privilege to be alongside people when they are facing the end of their lives. It brings out the best and worst of humanity, which is an extraordinary position to be in.”

Carolyn has been a member of the forum for two years. “Being on the committee helps me to do my job better as I’m at the forefront of new ideas and updates in this field of nursing.”

Join the RCN Pain and Palliative Care Forum at [www.rcn.org.uk/forums](http://www.rcn.org.uk/forums)

## Help to spot trafficking victims

The RCN has launched a new guide to help nurses spot victims of trafficking and address the lack of modern slavery awareness training in the NHS.

Carmel Bagness, RCN Professional Lead for Midwifery and Women’s Health, said: “With this pocket guide we hope to kick-start the journey to educate all nursing staff so that the health service does everything it can in the fight against modern slavery.”

The pocket guide will be carried by nurses and midwives in key parts of the NHS



such as GP surgeries, walk-in centres, A&E and maternity.

View the pocket guide (publication code 005 984) at [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)

## Protection for nurses working with children

The RCN has updated guidance to raise awareness of the complex issues surrounding safeguarding in relationships between nurses and children and young people. It concentrates on allegations of abuse made against nursing staff, for example smacking a child or inappropriate physical contact.

View *Protection of Nurses Working with Children and Young People* (publication code 006 153) at [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)

## Professional interest

The professional forums stand at Congress was a great success with 104 new members showing interest in signing up to an RCN forum. The stand provided delegates with a chance to find out more about what our professional interest groups do and how to get involved in shaping specialist areas.

The Congress agenda and events programme also showcased forums. To find out more and watch keynote speeches and debates visit [www.rcn.org.uk/congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress)

## WHAT I'M THINKING



### Dwynwen Spargo RCN CYP Staying Healthy Forum committee member

Having just returned from a conference on mental health in practice, what struck me was the lack of any mention of the school nurse. When I left the school nursing service six years ago, I had been fortunate enough to work with a passionate and motivated primary mental health team. Developing a trusting and therapeutic relationship with young people was core to our work.

The school nursing service is small and increasingly stretched to deliver in many key areas such as immunisation, surveillance, screening and safeguarding. School nurses tell me they have increasingly found they are supporting young people with mental health issues far longer than they have ever known before. Schools may not see their school nurse regularly, due to large caseloads, and I wonder if this, along with other factors, such as a rise in emotional health and wellbeing issues in young people, has led schools to engage other services to deliver a supportive service.

With almost daily news of cuts to public health practitioners in England it is a worrying time for children and young people’s health outcomes. Investment in this area is an investment in a healthy and productive future workforce. Therefore, investing in school nurses and health visitors, through adequately resourcing these services to deliver a healthy child programme, in all countries in the UK is urgently needed.

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



## School nursing

# RCN School Nurses Conference and Exhibition

**24 August**

Amba Hotel Marble Arch  
Bryanston Street  
London W1H 7EH

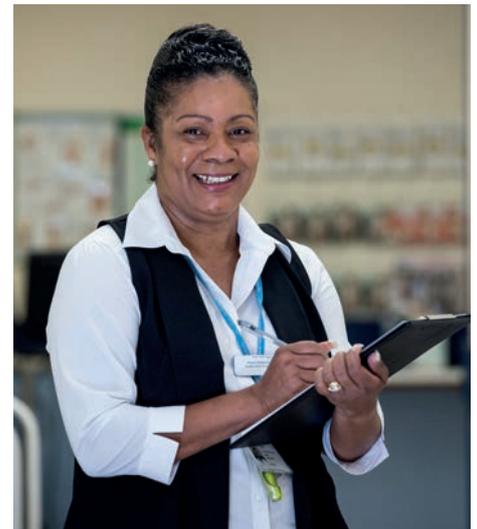
Do you feel isolated in your profession? Looking for an opportunity to network with professionals in your field?

This RCN conference will provide a valuable opportunity for you to meet other like-minded nurses and remain professionally up-to-date. The event is aimed at all nurses working in schools and educational settings, including those from academies, independent, free and

boarding schools. Sessions on the day include rising obesity, autism spectrum disorders and growth disorders.

Fiona Smith, RCN Professional Lead for Children and Young People, says: "School nurses can often be professionally isolated and this is an event aimed at bringing the profession together. It is a showcase for the work of the RCN CYP Staying Healthy Forum and will be useful in getting the most relevant news and developments in this field of nursing."

🕒 To book onto this event please fill in and return the booking form, or call our friendly registrations team on 02920 546 460.



## RCN Yorkshire & the Humber

### Binge eating disorders

**4 July**

RCN Yorkshire & the Humber  
9 Bond Court  
Leeds LS1 2JZ

This free learning session for members will cover the definition of binge eating disorders as well as an overview of treatments and how to identify trigger factors.

The presentation will be followed by the regular Leeds branch meeting, open to members working for Leeds-based employers.

🕒 For more information contact Lindsay Keeley: [lindsaykeeley01@hotmail.com](mailto:lindsaykeeley01@hotmail.com)

## RCN Scotland

### So you want to be an IBD nurse?

**5 September**

RCN Scotland HQ  
42 South Oswald Road  
Edinburgh EH9 2HH

Run jointly between the RCN Gastrointestinal Nursing Forum and Crohn's and Colitis UK, learn about inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and its impact on people's lives, the IBD nurse specialist role, and how to plan a career as an IBD nurse specialist.

Open to all registered nurses working at band 5 or above with:

- an interest in inflammatory bowel disease and specialist nursing as a career pathway



- experience in acute gastrointestinal nursing (e.g. colorectal/gastro wards, endoscopy, day case infusion units, stoma care, or clinical research)
- experience in acute specialist nursing in any other area of practice.

Attending this event will also accrue up to seven hours of CPD time towards revalidation.

🕒 Book a place by calling 0292 054 6460.