

**RCN
BULLETIN**



Royal College
of Nursing

CELEBRATING RCN REPS
P4 DOING THE ROUNDS

FILIPINO NURSES' REUNION
P10 FEATURE

THE MEANING BEHIND MOVEMBER
P13 FEATURE

ISSUE NO. 357 NOVEMBER 2017

**Cap
scrapped!**

**PAY CAMPAIGN
SUCCESS**

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

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Xtra benefits. Xtra easy.
Register now at www.rcn.org.uk/xtra



Trade union committee elected

RCN members have elected a new committee to shape the organisation's trade union work. It will ensure the College develops as a modern progressive trade union making a positive difference to the working lives of nursing staff. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/elections for the full list of results.

Andy Bassett-Scott Toogood, elected to represent Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "As a new committee we have such a lot to offer our members as now is such a challenging time for nursing."

Elections for the RCN Professional Nursing Committee, which will fulfil a vital role in helping the RCN to achieve its purpose as a royal college, are open until Wednesday 8 November. Visit <http://ersvotes.com/rcnpr17> to cast your vote.

Pushing for the living wage

As new living wage rates are announced next week, the RCN is continuing to campaign for a fair wage for all health care staff.

The rates are announced by the Living Wage Foundation every year and are higher than the Government's so-called national living wage, which currently stands at £7.50 an hour for those aged 25 and over.

"As a trade union and an accredited living wage employer, the RCN wants to see the Living Wage Foundation's rates applied to all health care staff," said Brian Morton, RCN National Officer.

"Pay rates for health care assistants in the independent sector in particular are often set at the national living wage or a penny or two above. We believe they deserve a fairer wage that will help lift people out of poverty."

Sunday 5 November marks the start of Living Wage Week, an annual celebration of the living wage and accredited employers. Find out more at www.livingwage.org.uk/living-wage-week, where the new rates will be revealed on Monday 6 November.



We believe HCAs deserve a fairer wage that will help lift people out of poverty

🕒 The RCN can help members ask for a pay increase. Find out more at <http://tinyurl.com/jbmgflb> or contact RCN Direct.

Have you had your flu jab?

The RCN is supporting this year's #jabathon, which aims to spark conversations about the importance of vaccination for frontline staff. Take part by tweeting your reasons for getting your flu jab using the hashtag #jabathon. The RCN is urging all members to protect themselves and their patients by getting vaccinated. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/flu vaccination





New 'blind spot' on number of NHS staff assaults

The RCN has warned that the number of assaults on nursing staff is on the rise and at risk of getting worse.

It comes as the Government confirms assaults data will no longer be specifically collected and scrutinised. It will instead rely on an annual survey that NHS workers complete on an optional basis to gather statistics.

“This creates a dangerous blind spot for ministers hoping to tackle the increasing number of assaults in the NHS,” said Kim Sunley, RCN Senior Employment Relations Advisor. “It is totally inadequate to rely on optional surveys, especially if the law is being tightened.”

NHS Protect, the body that used to collect the data, was scrapped in April. Its final figures showed a 4% rise in physical assaults against health care workers in England from 67,864 in 2014/15 to 70,555 in 2015/16.

Last year, a survey of RCN members found more than half had experienced physical or verbal abuse from patients and 63% from patients' relatives or other members of the public.

The news comes as a private member's bill is being discussed by MPs to strengthen the law against people who assault emergency workers.

Kim said: “This bill represents a vital step towards achieving that, but without the ability to fully monitor the figures, it will be difficult to quantify the scale of the problem, or the effectiveness of any new law.”

The cap's been scrapped - let's close the gap

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has said the 1% pay cap for NHS staff has been scrapped. Now efforts turn to securing a wage rise that makes up for the years of lost pay



After months of campaigning and a successful summer of protest, the Government has announced that NHS staff can get a pay rise of more than 1% from next year. Speaking in the House of Commons, Mr Hunt admitted the cap was unsustainable and declared “the pay cap has been scrapped”.

Prior to that the Government had given vague signals that greater flexibility would be applied to negotiations on pay but refused to make a firm commitment on scrapping the cap.

“Our members in every corner of the UK fought hard and can be proud of this achievement,” said Janet Davies, RCN Chief Executive. “The cap held pay below inflation and gave nursing professionals year-on-year pay cuts. With a staffing crisis building, it is absolutely right to lift it.”

But scrapping the cap alone isn't enough. The campaign focus now turns to closing the gap between what nursing staff across

all four UK countries currently earn and what they would earn if their pay had increased in line with the cost of living. In Northern Ireland, pay for nursing staff lags significantly behind that of elsewhere.

“The next pay offer must start to make up for the years of lost earnings,” Janet insisted. “It must be fully funded and not come from savings made through cuts to services.”

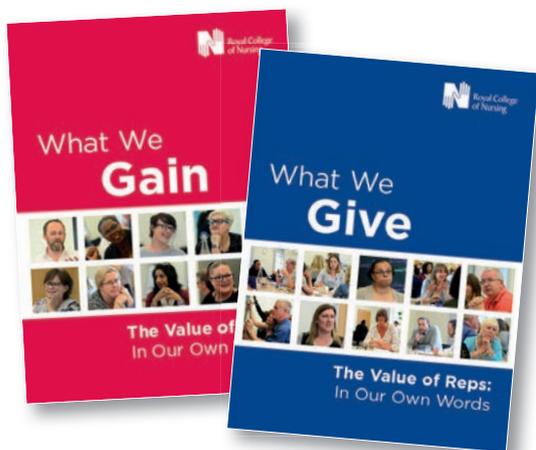
Although the cap is scrapped, it will be spring before details of a pay rise are known. The RCN will be submitting evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body in December and urging ministers to respect its independent recommendations.

Members are asked to continue applying pressure on the Government by writing to and meeting their MPs, sharing stories of how pay restraint has affected them personally.

Read more on pages 6, 7, 8 and 9.

4 DOING THE ROUNDS

New book celebrates RCN reps



a difference. Whether it's helping someone to develop their career, checking that staff are working safely or supporting members through the most difficult of times, our reps are there, every step of the way," says Chris Cox, RCN Director of Membership Relations.

Who are the RCN's reps? What do they do? And what impact can they have? These are some of the questions a new RCN book aims to answer, by shining a light on their work.

The Value of Reps: In Our Own Words celebrates the many achievements of learning reps, safety reps and stewards through their own stories, experiences and images.

"Every day, in workplaces around the UK, RCN reps are making

"Often they're working behind the scenes, with many members and employers having little idea of the huge contribution they make. But now we think it's time to celebrate our unsung heroes, showcasing what they do and their importance to all of us."

Divided into two halves – looking at what reps give to members and what they gain themselves from taking on the role – the book features contributions from almost two-dozen reps.

"Being part of this project has been wonderful," says learning rep and steward Jeremy Davies.

"I hope our work continues into the future, helping to move the profession forwards and inspiring others to join us."



Our reps are there every step of the way

Who's supported you?

Nominations are now open for the RCN Representative of the Year Awards 2018.

Please think about nominating someone for an award if you have been personally supported or represented by an exceptional RCN learning rep, safety rep or steward or have witnessed exceptional service by an RCN rep.

Winners will be presented with their awards at Congress next year. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved/rcn-awards

Download your copy of *The Value of Reps: In Our Own Words* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Flying to Belfast?

Members keen to attend RCN Congress 2018 in Belfast are advised to book their travel early to secure the cheapest flights. Flybe is offering delegates a 20% discount on flights to and from Belfast booked before 31 December. They fly to Belfast from Aberdeen, Birmingham, Cardiff, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Inverness, Leeds Bradford, Liverpool, London City, Manchester and Southampton. The discount applies to direct flights between 11 and 17 May.

Register for your Flybe discount at www.rcn.org.uk/congress

Partnership makes nursing a big issue

The RCN has joined forces with *The Big Issue* magazine to raise the profile of nursing and the work of the organisation.

From November, tabards worn by *The Big Issue* vendors will carry the RCN's logo as a visual sign of the partnership. In return, the magazine will include commentary from RCN staff and articles about health issues affecting rough sleepers.

The Big Issue launched in 1991 to offer homeless people the chance to earn a legitimate income through selling a magazine to the public. Visit www.bigissue.com



The big picture



RCN pay champions hand a petition of 67,000 names to Downing Street, opposing the Government's policy on public sector pay, following a successful summer of protest demanding the pay cap is scrapped.

MEET THE MEMBER



Each month *RCN Bulletin* asks a member to share a little bit about themselves.

Name: Karen Pike

Role: Health care assistant, Torbay Hospital

Describe your job in three words:

Challenging, satisfying, fulfilling

If you weren't an HCA what would you be? My friends would probably say a travel agent as I get good deals on holidays, but I think a counsellor.

What can't you do without at work?

My colleagues. We rely on each other and help each other out.

If you could have a superpower what would it be?

The ability to know what patients are thinking. They don't always say so we can't always help them.

Why did you choose this profession?

I've always wanted to do it. I didn't get the grades at school but after several years of doing other jobs I joined a local bank and haven't looked back.

Where is your dream holiday destination?

New York at Christmas, for the shopping and decorations. They do it bigger and better than here.

Karen was recently elected as the health practitioner member of the RCN Trade Union Committee. See page 2.

www.rcn.org.uk/elections



PATIENT PERSPECTIVE



Tim Saunders says he developed a new-found admiration for nursing staff during his recovery from open-heart surgery

“ About a year ago I went to the doctor's and was diagnosed with a life-threatening aortic dissection, a tear in the main blood vessel running down from the heart. I was sent to the operating theatre straightaway to undergo open-heart surgery. It was a complicated and risky procedure and I was under general anaesthetic for 12 hours. After the operation I was initially in hospital for 11 days, although I had to return for another two weeks following further complications.

Throughout my time on the cardiac ward at St George's Hospital in London the nurses were great. It wasn't just

their medical skills, although I was amazed at how much they knew. If I needed something in the middle of the night, not only would someone be there in minutes, but they would always have a smile on their face. I found it hard to sleep to begin with and my chest was very painful, but there would always be a nurse who was happy to chat as well as give me my medication.

I got to know some of them as people – Vince was very caring, Deidre was very funny – and I now have a new-found respect for nurses and the work they do under challenging circumstances. When you're working at 4am, often bearing the brunt of patients' complaints, to stay positive and continue to treat people with kindness and in good humour must take some doing. But it makes a huge difference to patients and I'm incredibly grateful.

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.

FROM THE HEART



Michaela Foster
Deputy ward manager

When I reflect on the last two years, I look back at what has been a successful period in my professional life, but one that has also been an ongoing battle with anxiety and depression. Talking about mental health is an incredibly daunting step for anybody to take, let alone a health care professional. This surely can't happen to us. It's not allowed. How can a doctor or nurse deliver high quality care to patients when they are suffering from mental illness themselves?

But think about it. When you are at your lowest ebb, feeling hopeless, vulnerable and unable to see the light at the end of that long, dark tunnel, who better to reassure you than someone who has experienced it first hand?

Depression is both the worst and best thing that's happened to me. When it crept up on me following a stressful personal event I believed I would never be well again. I thought I was incapable of being a successful nurse and didn't work for nine months. But it also turned out to be an experience that opened my eyes and has helped shape me in so many ways, both personally and professionally.

So thank you. Thank you anxiety and thank you depression. Thank you for enabling me to be good at what I do. Thank you for allowing me to understand the turbulent thought processes patients often experience during the darkest days. Thank you for helping me to realise exactly how they are feeling.

www.rcn.org.uk/healthy-you



What you've been saying

Home truths

In October, a colleague and I met with the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd MP. We told her that we need to see a real-terms wage rise for nursing staff. We talked about declining registered nurse numbers and I explained that a significant number of nurses are due to retire soon and already agency staff are consistently being used to fill the gaps.

We discussed the anxiety EU nationals feel over Brexit and the impact this may have on attracting EU staff to our profession. We also said the bursary problem needs urgently addressing as students from working class backgrounds can't currently afford to become nurses. Having now met her I'm going to be more than happy to beat a path to her door, especially if we don't get the pay rise we deserve.

🗨️ **Brian Bostock, by email**

Whistleblowing woes

I've worked in nursing homes for around 15 years and am passionate about care of the elderly. However, when I've raised serious safeguarding issues, I've found it difficult to continue working in the same place with the same managers and have felt forced to resign.

I then find it difficult to find new employment as the previous employer refuses to give a reference and by law they don't have to. The potential employer then thinks it's me who has the issue as I don't have a reference.

I'm at the end of my tether and am seriously thinking of leaving nursing altogether. All I've done is follow the nursing code by prioritising people, preserving safety, practising effectively and promoting professionalism.

🗨️ **Anonymous, by email**

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“The pay cap has been scrapped.”

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt announces that NHS workers will no longer have pay rises capped at 1% from next year

4 THINGS TO DO IN NOVEMBER

1. Remember those who have lost their lives in conflict. The RCN will be holding its annual remembrance ceremony on 8 November at its headquarters in London. www.rcn.org.uk/remembrance17
2. Grow a moustache or sponsor a man who has to help raise money for men's health charities. www.movember.com
3. Visit the latest RCN exhibition. *Hidden in Plain Sight: Celebrating Nursing Diversity* is open to the public at the RCN Library and Heritage Centre until 10 March 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/rcn-diversity-exhibition>
4. Wear a white ribbon on 25 November in support of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk

🗨️ 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

HOT TOPIC



A proposed new law would lead to tougher sanctions for people who attack emergency workers. Members shared their thoughts about the issue on Facebook:

“I think we’re living in a culture that accepts staff will be attacked, especially if working with patients with dementia and delirium. I feel we’re expected to get on with it and this is wrong. Of course, it’s not the patients’ fault, but it’s not the fault of staff either.” **Emma Walter**

“Working in mental health, assaults can be commonplace. We have to remember many people are lacking the ability to make an informed decision about their actions as they are too unwell. Our employers should provide more training to deal with conflict as it is not always avoidable.” **Justine Leigh**

“Trusts have a duty of care to protect staff, especially nursing staff. If patients, relatives or members of the public threaten or attack nursing staff, then trusts have a responsibility to act accordingly and appropriately to ensure their safety.” **Peter Jason Keegan**

“I work in mental health and assault is certainly not commonplace. I’d say it’s more commonplace in A&E on a Friday night. It’s unacceptable when it does occur regardless of the setting.” **Catherine Olliver-Kneafsey**

“Assault is assault and it shouldn’t happen. We need more security to actually do something and have the power to restrain abusive patients. Staff need to speak up and not just tolerate this kind of behaviour as it is totally unacceptable.” **Carol Anne Campbell Billam**

MESSAGE TO MEMBERS



Janet Davies
RCN Chief Executive

Having Jeremy Hunt declare the pay cap has been scrapped is a huge win for the RCN and its members. You worked tirelessly over the summer to get our message across, attending rallies, showing your strength of feeling on social media and writing to MPs about how pay restraint has affected you.

The RCN has shown it’s a force to be reckoned with. Together, we’ve made sure our Scrap the Cap campaign couldn’t be ignored. I want to thank you for supporting us with such passion and enthusiasm.

But our work is far from over. Scrapping the cap alone isn’t enough. We’re now focusing on making sure the pay award is not below inflation, is for all nurses and health care assistants, and that the NHS is not asked to make other cuts to pay for it.

Hunt’s words might feel like a hollow victory – we haven’t secured a fair pay award for nursing staff just yet. But the fact that he used our campaign slogan – referring specifically to scrapping the cap – shows we’re making him listen and our messages are getting through.

Now we must keep up the momentum. Nursing staff must get the pay offer they deserve, otherwise we’ll be failing the very people who keep the health service going and the patients who rely on them so much.

www.rcn.org.uk/closethegap



A remarkable sacrifice



One hundred years on from the end of the Battle of Passchendaele, member Professor Christine Hallett reflects on the bravery of nurses caught up in the conflict

For the past ten months I’ve been leading a project to commemorate the work of nurses during the Battle of Passchendaele, one of the bloodiest clashes of the First World War. It has enabled me to understand more fully the courage of women like Nellie Spindler, a Wakefield nurse who made the ultimate sacrifice in caring for others.

On 21 August 1917, Nellie came off a long night shift at a casualty clearing station at Brandhoek in the Flanders area of

Belgium and went to sleep in her bell tent. Around 11am a shrapnel shell exploded right outside her quarters and a piece of shell casing ripped through the canvas and then through her body just below the level of her heart.

The sister-in-charge tried to save her young colleague, but the injury had caused a catastrophic haemorrhage, and all she could do was hold Nellie in her arms while she died.

These nurses had known for some time what danger they were in. Nellie and approximately 60 other nurses had been working at Brandhoek since 29 July. The area had been under constant bombardment, but they had remained at their posts, knowing that they were needed to care for men being brought back from the battlefields east of Ypres.

Christine’s book, *Nurses of Passchendaele*, is available from Pen and Sword Books.

8 FEATURES

How you helped scrap the cap

After a hard fought campaign, NHS workers' pay will no longer be capped at 1%. *RCN Bulletin* looks back at how things started and how much has been achieved

28 March

The UK Government decides to continue with the 1% pay cap for NHS staff in England. RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies says this is a "bitter blow" to nursing staff.

28 June

Parliament narrowly rejects a Labour amendment to the Queen's Speech to scrap the cap.

April-May

RCN Council agrees to test member appetite for action on pay. More than 50,000 respond to a pay poll, with 91% saying they're prepared to take some form of industrial action. A summer of protest is planned.

“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 Brown, Chair of RCN Council.



8 June

General election



16 June

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt tells the NHS Confederation annual conference that he will discuss the pay cap with the Chancellor Philip Hammond, but...

13 July

As the pay campaign gathers momentum, cross-party peers urge the Government to scrap the cap. In a letter to the Prime Minister they write:

“Patient care and safety is inevitably compromised when hospitals and other care settings are short of staff.”

5 September

Nichola Sturgeon says she will lift the 1% public sector pay cap in Scotland.

27 June

The RCN's Summer of Protest is launched with members joining demonstrations in 30 locations across the UK.



21 June

...no mention of the pay cap is made in the Queen's Speech. "It should have been scrapped today," says Janet Davies.

27 July

The second day of nationwide Scrap the Cap protests are held, as RCN figures show the number of experienced nurses leaving the profession has doubled in the last three years.

**25 August**

A digital day of action spreads the Scrap the Cap message to two million people on social media.

**28 September**

RCN Council condemns the “vague signals” from the Government on nursing pay and says the RCN could ballot for industrial action if the cap is not scrapped in the autumn Budget.

12 September

Theresa May says the 1% pay cap will be lifted for police and prison offers and says there will be “flexibility” for other public sector workers, but fails to say the cap will definitely be lifted for nursing staff.

The cap is scrapped!

6 September

The RCN holds its largest ever rally as thousands of members and supporters descend on Parliament Square in London. Speakers include comedian Rob Delaney and Sir Tony Robinson. On the same day, RCN members meet MPs in Parliament to talk about the effects of the pay cap.



Charlotte Jones, an intensive care nurse from north Devon, says:

“The Government needs to listen to us and recognise what we do. We don’t want footballers’ wages – just enough so we can afford to stay in the job.”

**10 October**

Jeremy Hunt tells the House of Commons “the cap has been scrapped” for NHS staff.

“Our members in every corner of the UK fought hard and can be proud of this achievement.”

Janet Davies, RCN Chief Executive.



10 FEATURES

When Bath became home

Maria Walker travelled from the Philippines to embark on a nursing career in the UK nearly 50 years ago. This autumn she returned to the city where she trained to rekindle some fond memories

Picture the early 1970s and what comes to mind? Flares? Disco? Huge black and white TVs?

For one group of former nurses, it brings back memories of travelling thousands of miles from their homes and families to embark on a nursing career in the UK.

RCN member Maria Walker took a trip back in time recently when she used Facebook to look up her former Filipino colleagues and organise a special reunion at their old nurses' home.

Fourteen nurses who'd made the long journey in the 70s revisited their old stomping ground, gathering in the Macdonald Bath Spa Hotel – the very building where they first trained and socialised.

Maria was still living with her family at home in the Philippines before she came to the UK aged just 18 in 1971. She takes up her story...



The Bath Spa Nurses' Home 1977, courtesy of *Bath in Time*



I was apprehensive and worried about being alone away from home

I'd started training as a teacher but my mother heard that student nurses were being recruited from overseas to England so she told me to do a pre-nursing course instead. My father was reluctant, but my mother thought it was a golden opportunity for me to study nursing, especially in another country.

There were nurses, midwives and doctors on both sides of my parents' family so this might

have influenced my mother's choice for me. But I'm sure she thought it was a way to keep me away from boys too!

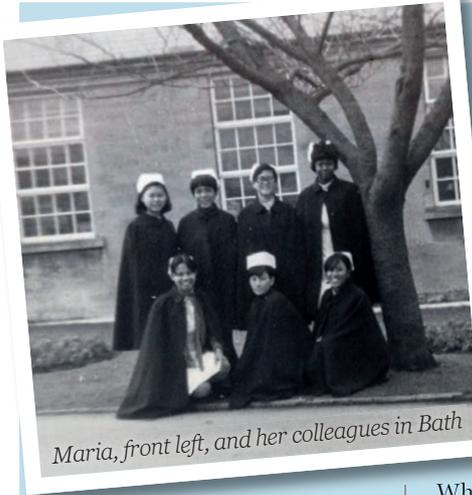
I had a strict upbringing, and there was no way my parents would ever have allowed me to study in big cities in the Philippines, which my mother viewed as "sin cities". Back then it wasn't uncommon for parents, especially mothers, to decide their children's career paths. But I wasn't excited about studying

nursing in England. I was apprehensive and worried about being alone away from home.

Nurses' home life

When I arrived in Bath I found myself living with other nurses of many other nationalities at what was then called The Spa Nurses Home. I worked 40 hours every week and our strict but caring Irish warden would have a copy of my off-duty rota so she would know what I was doing every day.

Edited by Sharon Palfrey.



Maria, front left, and her colleagues in Bath



A wintry day during training. Maria is back centre

I didn't pay for my accommodation and had free meals and even free transport to and from work in those days. Every effort was made to help us. If we were on an early shift, to make sure we didn't miss our coach, the porter would wake us by knocking on our door at about 6am, opening it and switching the light on, saying: "Good morning nurse." They said this again and again until we gave a verbal response. There was no chance of oversleeping and we definitely didn't need an alarm clock.

Initially I was paid around £1.50 an hour which was a lot of money then and I felt quite well-off. On pay day I'd occasionally treat myself but we all sent presents or money to our family back home too.

Social life

Any social gathering in the nurses' home, especially at night, was monitored by the warden and her team who made sure we stayed safe. Male visitors were instructed to remain in the reception area – under no circumstances were they ever allowed in our rooms!

Do you have a unique historical nursing story to tell? The RCN wants to hear from you. Get in touch at rcn.library@rcn.org.uk

When the clock struck 10, our warden would politely bid them goodnight and would send us nurses to bed.

We all still managed to enjoy parties and dances – it's where many of us met our future husbands. Although there were strict curfews, a few of us occasionally got into our ground floor rooms through our windows which we deliberately left unlocked.

Training

I spent a lot of my state enrolled nurse training doing practical placements in hospital wards. There was a lot less theory in those days and the equipment wasn't as sophisticated as it is now. Looking back I realise how privileged I was to have the opportunities I had, yet be so protected. I probably didn't appreciate that at the time. Back then all I wanted was a better life in the UK and to learn a valued profession.

Maria later qualified as a registered general nurse and worked for the NHS for 30 years, finishing in a senior management position in the community.



Back together: Maria, front right, at the 2017 reunion. Picture by Tim Gander

Still needed

The NHS has never been self-sufficient and always relied on staff from outside the UK. NHS hospitals and community services have increasingly relied on international recruitment due to a shortage of British nurses.

However, following the decision to leave the European Union, there's been a 96% drop in nurses from the EU registering to practice in the UK, which the RCN says could have severe consequences for patients. A Freedom of

Information request has revealed that 2,700 EU nurses already working in the UK left the NMC register in 2016.

Donna Kinnair, RCN Director of Nursing, Policy and Practice, says: "Nurses trained in other countries have contributed to the NHS since its inception. Because of years of short-sighted workforce planning, the NHS will continue to be reliant on international recruitment for the foreseeable future."

Caring at Christmas

Two members share their positive experiences of volunteering for Crisis, the national charity for homeless people



One in four homeless people will spend Christmas alone this year. And with homelessness increasing, the skills of nursing staff are more important than ever to help those in need over the festive period.

Chair of the RCN Public Health Forum Jason Warriner is a trustee of Crisis, and volunteers every year as a health care manager at one of its Crisis at Christmas centres. “For every hour you give, you get seven hours back with what you learn and understand. As well as being richly rewarding, it’s really enhanced my career,” says Jason, who first volunteered in 2002 and took over a management role in 2007.

Jason explains there are five health clinics a day between 10am to 5pm that tend to a variety of health needs. “It could be something as simple as blood pressure, through to respiratory or sexual health. We also encounter a lot of people with mental health issues, or issues with alcohol or drug dependency. There are no hard and fast rules, it might take two minutes to help someone or it might take four

hours and that’s OK too – the care we provide is totally focused around a person’s specific needs.”

Something different

Team work is crucial. “Everyone has something to contribute – doctors, nurses, HCAs, pharmacists – and we all pull together. It’s not a traditional environment so it’s not for everyone, but for many volunteers it’s a chance to do something a bit different, and spend time with people who have a common purpose. It replaces the commercial aspect of Christmas with something much more meaningful.”

Paediatric nurse Avril Burton Stewart, who works with Jason, has been volunteering for Crisis at Christmas for more than 15 years. “I have three sons and when I look at them I think, that could be them homeless with no-one to turn to, and as a mother I would be so grateful for the love and support Crisis provides.

“A lot of our guests – those who use the health service – don’t

have family, don’t have much money, and don’t know how to access health care. I am in a privileged position, and by volunteering I feel I can at least do something to help.”

Avril says there can be difficult days but you get incredible support as a volunteer. “You’re never, ever alone. Everyone looks after each other so you never feel like you can’t cope. However emotional it’s been at times I’ve always gone back as there are many people in horrific situations and you just can’t turn away from them,” she adds.

“One of the nice things about volunteering is being able to spend time with one person if you feel so inclined,” says Avril. “So many people just want someone to talk to. It’s taking nursing back to the basics and there’s something wonderful about that. Despite the challenges, it doesn’t have the same pressures as your usual day-to-day work. I find volunteering so rewarding, and work with such warm, lovely people, I’d say it’s my favourite week of the year.”

Interested?

Crisis at Christmas runs from 22-29 December 2017 with centres set to open across London, Birmingham, Newcastle, Coventry and Edinburgh. The health care service is always one of the most popular on offer, giving guests access to valuable services they usually miss out on during the rest of the year. Register at www.crisis.org.uk/volunteer



It’s taking nursing back to basics

Words by Sophie Lowthian. Picture by Sam Mellish.

Join the RCN Public Health Forum at www.rcn.org.uk/forums

The meaning behind Movember

November sees many men grow a moustache to raise money for health charities. Sarah Abley speaks to member Teresa Lynch whose role supporting men with prostate cancer is part-funded by the initiative

If you've begun to notice an increase in bristling top lips this month, then you could be witnessing the effects of Movember, the annual moustache-growing campaign to boost awareness of men's health issues and raise funds for related charities.

One of those charities is Prostate Cancer UK, which receives money from the Movember Foundation towards its projects. And while the month-long event puts prostate cancer in the spotlight, the charity's work continues all year round.

In particular, its specialist nurses provide support and information for men living with prostate cancer or worried they may have it. RCN member Teresa Lynch (pictured) has worked on the charity's helpline for eight years alongside 12 other specialist nurses to provide support.

Asking the right questions

"The men who call can be anything from 30 to 60 and beyond – although most of our calls are from those over 40," she says. "Sometimes it's just a one-off call, but on other occasions you can talk to the same person a number of times. We always tell people not to hesitate to call us back and often they do. If it's appropriate, we'll call them back too.

"We give a wide range of support, from helping people deal with emerging worries to coping with diagnoses and symptoms. Many are reluctant to bother their

GP and call us first, which is an opportunity to help them into the care of professionals.

"It's not unusual for callers to be very quiet. We use our skills to ask the right questions to get them talking and give us the facts we need to begin to help and reassure them."

The service isn't just confined to the phone. "As well as calls we talk to people via email and live webchats," explains Teresa. "Additionally we speak to support groups and can help to train volunteers. Our service supporting men with severe fatigue is having more success each year. Levels of fatigue are going down, which is really satisfying."

Keeping the team's knowledge and skills up-to-date is also a priority for the charity. "A variety of external specialists provide clinical supervision," says Teresa. "It could be a counselling expert or clinical nurse specialists from specific areas. Every nurse also takes part in regular 360 reviews and we're encouraged to work on our continuing professional development."

Taking around 14,000 calls each year, every day provides new challenges and situations for the team. "It's a different type of nursing," Teresa says, "It's not hands-on, but I'm happy to give support from a different perspective. It's good to know that we're helping nurses who are busy on the ward and giving men and their relatives a private, uninterrupted chance to talk."



Movember Foundation

The Movember Foundation is a global charity which was started in Australia by friends Travis Garone and Luke Slattery. Since 2003 it has raised more than £400 million to support projects and aims by 2030 to reduce the number of men dying prematurely by 25%. If you want to become a Mo Bro or a Mo Sista this November, visit the website at www.movember.co.uk

Prostate Cancer UK

Prostate Cancer UK aims to shift science over the next 10 years to focus on radical improvements in diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and support, stopping prostate cancer from being a killer.

For more information about available funding, educational opportunities, the latest research news, key policy documents, information on best practice and resources to support your patients visit prostatecanceruk.org/for-health-professionals

Sharing expertise overseas

RCN Fellow and member of the International Nursing Network Fiona Stephenson was recently honoured with a Cavell Nurses' Trust Award for International Impact



A spinal injury specialist, Fiona (pictured above left in Tanzania) has taken her expertise to many countries in crisis over the years.

"I feel so privileged to have received top-class training here in the UK and it is a real honour

to be able to share that with people who haven't had the same opportunities," she said.

"Imparting knowledge and learning from one another is such an important part of being a nurse and is why I love being

involved with the RCN forums. They offer such an invaluable platform for this," she added.

Fiona was involved in health care capacity building after the earthquakes in both Nepal and Haiti, for which she was given the award. "It's great to be recognised for this work, but the real reward is being able to supply sustainable knowledge and medical training to countries in need," she said.

Fiona believes that working internationally is a great experience for any nurse. "It's not just a working holiday," she hastened to add. "To truly benefit an international community, you need to have the skills and confidence to equip them. It's teaching people how to fish for themselves rather than just turning up fish in hand."

Fiona contributed to the recently-launched RCN guidance on working internationally, which can be downloaded from: tinyurl.com/working-internationally



The real reward is supplying medical training to countries in need

Law change allows allergy pens to be kept in schools

After a lengthy campaign, supported by RCN CYP Forums and their school nurse members, the law has been changed to allow schools to keep spare adrenalin auto-injectors and use them for children with serious allergies in emergencies.

Previously, children needed a prescription to have one in school. Now children with severe



This will save lives

allergies will be able to access the life-saving treatment if their allocated device is not available, doesn't work properly, is used incorrectly or if they need an extra dose. In the UK, 17% of fatal allergic reactions in children happen while at school.

Fiona Smith, RCN Professional Lead for Children and Young People's Nursing, said: "Fatal

anaphylaxis is rare, but unpredictable. This will save lives and the success of Anaphylaxis UK's campaign, supported by the RCN, is great news for children and their families."

The spare devices can only be used on children at risk of anaphylaxis where consent from doctors and parents has already been obtained.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Defence Nursing Forum

Who's the Chair?

Nurse Tutor Major Chris Carter. Chris has been a member of the forum since 2010 and became Chair five years ago with the aim of driving the forum to be more education-focused.

Recent highlights?

The forum endeavours to maintain an innovative edge, always looking forward in this constantly-evolving specialty. Workshops have included ones on refugee health, in anticipation of the migrant crisis, and on surgical care in environments with limited equipment.

What's coming up?

The forum is putting together a resource for professionals who are new to defence nursing to help them navigate the delicate balance between their civilian and military careers. *The Transitional Aide Memoir* takes into consideration all the diverse strands of the specialty and signposts towards information on the various structures and policies.

Why join?

Chris says: "Defence nursing is such a vast and diverse specialty and the forum is a place where each aspect is represented and catered for. We have fantastic links across the forums as well and do a lot of collaborative work. Becoming a member offers fantastic opportunities for networking, being involved in innovative education projects and helping raise the profile of defence nursing."

Find out more about the Defence Nursing Forum at www.rcn.org.uk/forums or visit their Facebook page.



WHAT I'M THINKING



Zeba Arif

Nursing in Justice and Forensic Health Care Forum

Debriefing is something you might already be familiar with if you work in mental health or forensic and criminal justice settings. Obviously, when dealing with patients who have mental health problems, there are any number of incidents that might (and do) occur.

The trust I worked for had a structured system for debriefing and whenever there was an incident there was usually an opportunity to discuss what happened, how it affected the nursing staff and how a similar situation could be dealt with in the future for a more positive outcome.

Nowadays, working in any health care setting is hardly ever uneventful, be it on a ward, a unit or in the community. And a "quiet" shift a rarity. I believe a culture of debriefing is essential, not only to deliver high quality care but also for every nurse's confidence and wellbeing.

Various NHS trusts in the four countries have some debriefing systems in place. I believe there should be coherent structures so it becomes an integral part of working life and initiates improvement processes.

There is a stigma around debriefing, as if it's admitting failure in some way. This perception needs to change and nursing staff should regularly have access to a space where they feel listened to and supported, but can also reflect and learn.

www.rcn.org.uk/forums



Be insulin aware – never pre-draw

As World Diabetes Day approaches on 14 November, members of the Diabetes Forum are keen to draw attention to significant changes to available insulin strengths.

Until fairly recently, insulin was only available in one strength: 100 units/ml. It now comes in several higher strengths, meaning extra attention to the volume administered is crucial to ensure patient safety.

These changes won't necessarily have been made obvious to nursing staff who don't work within the diabetes specialty so it has become even more vital that insulin is never pre-drawn from a pen or cartridge to ensure it is correctly administered, and patients don't overdose.

Hawking annual MND lecture series

Stephen Hawking has welcomed a collaboration between the Neuroscience Forum and the Motor Neurone Disease Association, which will see the first Hawking Annual MND Lecture held at RCN HQ on 22 November.

Professor Hawking said: "I commend the creation of this permanent fixture in the RCN calendar. I hope that in this, and future years, the lecture generates improved outcomes for people living with MND."

At this year's event Professor Carolyn Young, from the Walton Centre Liverpool, will be discussing the ground-breaking TONiC study which aims to improve the quality of life for people living with MND and other neurological conditions.

16 EVENTS

For details of more events visit the region and country pages of the RCN website or go to www.rcn.org.uk/events

Yorkshire and the Humber

Multicultural nurses' network event

29 November

Rivermead Centre
Northern General Hospital
Sheffield S5 7EH

This is a free networking and learning event for nursing staff who have come from other countries to work in the UK. It's open to both members and non-members to access support and professional development. There will be sessions on becoming an RCN rep, updates on legal documentation and opportunities to meet others.

📧 [Email yorkshireandhumberevents@rcn.org.uk](mailto:email.yorkshireandhumberevents@rcn.org.uk)

London

The making of emergency nurses

24 November

RCN HQ
20 Cavendish Square
London W1G 0RN

Earn five hours of CPD at this interactive workshop for band 5 and 6 nurses looking to advance their career in emergency nursing. Packed with advice from experts in the field, this workshop gives updates on critical care and tools for career progression.

Nichola Ashby, RCN Professional Lead for Emergency Care, said: "This event is a must for nurses looking to achieve their



career goals in emergency care and will give guidance on how to continue their professional development."

📍 Visit www.rcn.org.uk/rcneca17london



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