

RCN STUDENTS

SPRING/SUMMER 2017



MY NURSING HERO
STEVEN ON MENTOR SUE P8

Trans care p10
RCN Congress p11
Career options p12
Housing advice p17



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Hello

I'm delighted to welcome you to my first issue of *RCN Students* as Chair of the RCN Students Committee. It's an honour to have been elected by my fellow nursing students and I will do everything I can to ensure the issues that matter to you are made a priority by the RCN.



One of the biggest issues facing nursing is, of course, pay. The Government's decision to continue to cap NHS pay rises at 1% will affect us all, whether now, if you work in the NHS alongside your studies, or when you graduate. Many nursing staff already struggle to make ends meet, and by continuing to keep pay well below inflation the Government is only making things worse. The RCN is seeking members' views on how to respond, so if you work for the NHS in any capacity please visit www.rcn.org.uk/pay-poll to have your say. Your future is at stake.

On a more positive note, RCN Congress is just around the corner. If you haven't booked your place at the biggest event in the nursing calendar, there's still time to do so – visit www.rcn.org.uk/congress. If you are going, you're in for a treat. This will be my third Congress, and the knowledge, contacts and enthusiasm I've gained in previous years continue to serve me well. There's a fantastic student programme this year – we've picked out some of the highlights on page 11.

In this issue we also celebrate Nurses' Day (page 8) and look at the range of career options available to students (page 12), plus much more. Enjoy.

Kathryn Davies

Chair, RCN Students Committee
Student member of RCN Council

Write for us!

The editor of *RCN Students* is always looking for contributions. If you've got a story to share, whether it's an experience from placement, an elective overseas or a personal reflection on nursing, why not get in touch? Your work could be read by more than 40,000 nursing students across the country. Email studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk



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Editor: Tom Metcalf

Production: Mark Kalaher

Design: Debbie Roberts

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

Editorial: 020 7647 3933

Website: www.rcn.org.uk

Publication code: 006 123

Email the editor:

studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk

Cover image: Pete Carr



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New placement opportunities

NHS Blood and Transplant services (NHSBT) will offer placements to nursing students in the near future.

Providing blood, tissue and organs to UK hospitals, the service is currently piloting a nursing student placement in Sheffield, while having discussions with Oxford University Hospitals, to see how it might become an extension of the existing student programme.

“We’ve also just launched our nursing strategy, which contains a commitment to setting up our own student placement programme,” explains Catherine Howell, one of NHSBT’s three chief nurses, with responsibility for diagnostics and therapeutic services.

“We’d like to offer a short-term experience for students that could cover transfusions and safety, organ and tissue donation, and blood disorders,” says Catherine. NHSBT’s new nursing council will be established this summer, when they will begin writing a vision for the scheme, to be ready within 12 months.

Find out more:

www.nhsbtcareers.co.uk/our-organisation



Students lead the way at RCN conferences

Students were high on the agenda and at the centre of the action at the recent RCN Education Conference in Cardiff, with topics such as the transition from student to newly registered nurse and debriefing following clinical placements discussed.

One workshop focused on the value of clinical placements in the private, voluntary and independent sectors, and the University of the West of Scotland shared its findings on research into students’ experiences of recruitment and admissions to its nursing programmes.

Keynote speaker Professor Dame Jill MacLeod Clark (pictured) urged delegates to get involved with the work being undertaken to review the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) pre-registration education standards for future graduate nurses. She said this work has highlighted the need to change what’s required of new registrants to meet the public’s need for clinical nursing leadership in the future. Read more about the new standards on page 6.



Image: Duncan Soar/Visit Britain

Nursing students’ experiences were also discussed at the RCN International Nursing Research Conference in Oxford last month. Topics covered included mindfulness as a stress reduction tool for students and a project at the University of Surrey to give students experience of working with people living with dementia.

RCN conducting 'pay poll'



**We need
to hear
from you!**

The RCN is seeking members' views on the next steps of its campaign for better nursing pay in the face of continuing pay restraint.

Governments in England, Scotland and Wales have all announced the 1% cap on pay rises for NHS staff will continue for another year. This means nursing pay will lag behind the cost of living for the sixth year in a row.

RCN Council, the College's elected governing body, is carrying out a survey of members following the continuation of the pay cap.

Members across the UK who work in the NHS, including students in support worker roles, are being asked about the impact of pay restraint and how the College should respond, including whether members should consider industrial action.

RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies said: "The decision taken by RCN Council shows their concern for the impact continued pay restraint is having on dedicated nursing staff. Take this important opportunity to make your voice heard."

There has yet to be an announcement about nursing pay in Northern Ireland.

If you work in the NHS, complete the pay poll at www.rcn.org.uk/pay-poll by 11pm on Sunday 7 May.

Fall in nursing applicants

Figures from university admission service UCAS show the number of people applying to study nursing has fallen 23% from 2016. The number of mature students – those over 25 – has dropped by more than a quarter.

The RCN has consistently warned the Government its decision to scrap bursaries and charge fees to nursing students from August 2017 would result in fewer applications.

RCN Chief Executive Janet Davies said if this meant fewer nurses graduating in 2020 it would exacerbate an already unsustainable staffing crisis.

"This leaves a serious concern that the Government is storing up problems for the future," said Janet.

The Government said removing funding would create an extra 10,000 training places this parliament.

Change to renting rules

For nursing students living in rented accommodation, letting fees and rogue landlords may hopefully soon be a thing of the past.

A Government white paper on housing in England includes proposals to ban landlords who offer sub-standard properties and prevent letting agents from charging fees, which can add significantly to the cost of rented accommodation.

There are also plans to introduce quotas of affordable rented accommodation and incentives to encourage landlords to offer guaranteed three-year tenancies.

For tips on how to find suitable student housing, turn to page 17.

Shaping the next generation

Everything you need to know about the new standards nursing students of the future will be expected to meet



The NMC has also found nurses are qualifying with varying knowledge and skills. It says new standards are needed to make sure nurses are prepared for the future and “have the right knowledge, skills and professional attributes when they join the register, so that they can deliver safe and effective care throughout their careers”.

When will the new standards be introduced?

The NMC is expected to launch a full public consultation on the new standards shortly. It says it expects to publish the final set early next year, with some universities able to implement them from September 2018. The standards will then be adopted by all higher education institutions from September 2019.

What will change?

The new standards will apply across all current fields of practice and all health care settings. According to the NMC, they “will give all nurses an understanding of mental health care and physical care and will reflect the growing focus on public health and health education”.

More specifically, draft plans by the NMC suggest the new standards will require newly registered nurses to be competent in more than 70 technical skills, including nasogastric tube insertion, injection of intravenous drugs and urinary catheterisation. The plans also list more than 20 communication skills covering different patients, such as those who are depressed or have dementia, as

What's happening?

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the body which regulates registered nurses and midwives in the UK, is reviewing its education standards for nursing students. These standards are the set of skills and competencies all students must meet before they can register.

Why is it doing this?

The current pre-registration standards date back to 2010. Since then, there have been significant changes in health care. Nurses are now expected to take on more responsibilities and more complex roles across a range of health care settings, while patients have more complex conditions and co-morbidities.

well as how to interact with other team members and deal with uncertain or changing situations. It's worth pointing out this could still change before the standards are put out for consultation.

What about prescribing?

The NMC is reviewing its prescribing standards at the same time as the pre-registration education ones. Currently prescribing can only be carried out by nurses who have completed a post-registration course, but as part of the review it is considering including some prescribing competencies at pre-registration level. This means all nurses would have some prescribing experience when they register.

Are any others standards being reviewed?

Yes. The standards for education providers – universities and organisations offering practice placements – are also under review. This review will cover things such as mentorship, assessment, practice hours and the use of simulation. The NMC says it wants “to address the variability of learning opportunities in practice and ensure a more consistent student experience”.

Pre-registration standards for midwifery are also being updated. The development of these standards is running a year behind the nursing ones, with a public consultation on the draft version planned for spring 2018.

Has the RCN been involved?

Yes. RCN members and staff have been working hard to influence the changes

to the standards and ensure members' views and priorities are represented. Members of the RCN Students Committee have been involved in a number of NMC workshops looking at specific areas of the standards, such as skills and models for practice-based learning.

The RCN has also been co-ordinating member feedback on the standards, which will be used to inform its response to the consultation.

How can I influence the new standards?

Have your say on the new standards at a series of workshops, organised by the RCN, which will take place from June onwards. As current students, your input will be invaluable. Find out more and register your interest at

www.rcn.org.uk/education-workshops

Francesca Elner, RCN Students Committee member

“It's good the NMC has involved current students in reviewing the pre-registration standards. We need to have a voice as we're the beginning of the future of nursing. We see things with a fresh pair of eyes and can question things in a way others wouldn't. We're also more in touch with the current standards and can provide current perspectives of what it's like to be a student nurse”



Francesca is part of an NMC thought leadership group looking at the new standards.

Magnificent mentors

To mark Nurses' Day, two RCN student members celebrate inspirational mentors who've had a profound impact on them

Every year on 12 May the nursing profession takes centre stage for Nurses' Day. Held on the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth, it's a chance to celebrate the remarkable difference nursing staff make on a daily basis.

The RCN's theme for this year's event is nursing staff as superheroes of health care; there when they are needed most, changing lives with their unique set of skills. In the spirit of this theme, *RCN Students* spoke to two nursing students who nominated an inspirational mentor as their nursing superhero.

Steven Shaw, a third-year mental health nursing student at the University of Cumbria, on Susan Ball, his mentor from his first placement in second year

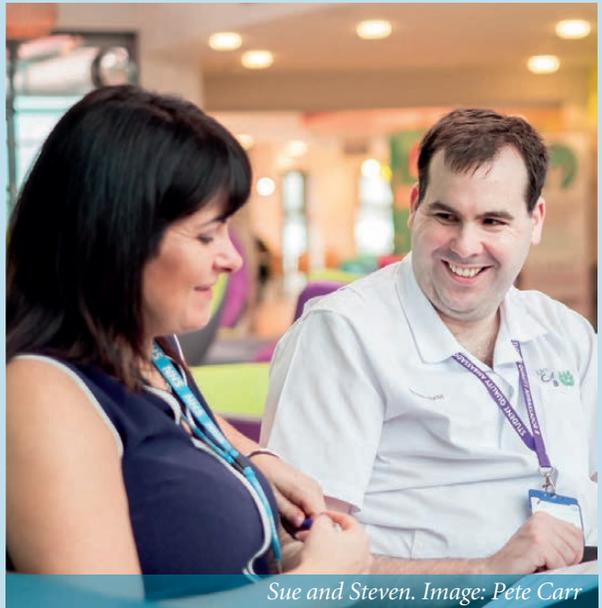
“When I first met Sue I could see straightaway she had that raw passion for caring, a genuine enthusiasm for her job. She takes the time to talk to patients and takes their views into account – that's real person-centred care.

She also goes above and beyond the call of duty. One incident in particular sticks in my mind. We went to visit a client who had been inappropriately discharged and was isolated, hungry and distressed. At Sue's suggestion we brought him fish and chips, emphasised we were there to support him and arranged an appointment for him for the following morning, which led to a new hospital admission.

We saw him again two weeks later and, thankfully, he was a lot better. But he told us he would have killed himself that evening if we hadn't been to see him. Sue's experience and compassion saved his life.

Sue's inspired me to push myself, and since working with her I've been shortlisted for a student mental health nurse of the year award. That's largely down to her.

She's also very honest. She'd question me, but she'd also treat me like a partner. I was very appreciative of that. She engaged with me and made me think. It wasn't just 'mentor do, student see'. I found her really inspiring – she's a powerhouse!



Sue and Steven. Image: Pete Carr

Angela Mwambazi, a third-year adult nursing student at Birmingham City University, on Francesca Acquah, her mentor on her most recent placement on a gynaecology ward at Birmingham Women's Hospital



“ It was quite an emotional placement to start with. I wasn't prepared to encounter women having terminations and miscarriages and I initially found that hard, but Fran was reassuring. She took me to one side and said I didn't have to do or see anything I wasn't comfortable with.

Fran's very confident, copes well with stress and doesn't crumble under pressure. She's approachable, supportive and knowledgeable, and will share her skills with students and other nurses alike. She's passionate about her job and very encouraging.

She shared her own student experiences with me – day-to-day advice like how to deal with angry patients and breaking bad news, those sorts of things.



Before that placement I was reluctant to approach other members of staff to ask them to do something, but Fran gave me the confidence to delegate and I'm now more assertive. By the end of my placement I saw myself as ready to move on from being a student nurse to a qualified nurse.

A lot of people on the ward look up to Fran – not just nurses and HCAs but the doctors and physios too. The first thing everyone said to me when I started was 'make the most of Fran'. I'm glad I did.

Get the most from your mentor

The RCN has produced guidance for students on how to get the best from their practice placements, including information on what to expect from your mentor. Download the guidance at www.rcn.org.uk/publications. Find it quickly using publication code 006 035.

Get ready for Nurses' Day

Want to take part in Nurses' Day celebrations? There are several ways to get involved:

- **On social media.** Add a Nurses' Day Twibbon or banner to your Facebook or Twitter profile, and use the hashtag #nurseheroes
- **On the RCN website.** Follow Steven and Angela in highlighting an inspirational colleague. Tell us about your nurse hero on the Nurses' Day website – www.rcn.org.uk/nurses-day
- **Have a party!** Everyone loves cake, so why not hold a party at your university or on placement?



A smoother journey

Trans people have worse experiences of health services than other groups. What can students do to change this?



“**T**rans people have traditionally been the least protected of the ‘protected’ groups. It’s a key part of the Equality Act that’s not being properly upheld,” explains Guy Thomas, an RCN officer in the East Midlands.

The 2010 Equality Act prohibits discrimination against individuals and groups because of their gender, yet in a report last year the House of Commons Women and Equalities Select Committee stated: “The NHS is failing to ensure zero tolerance of transphobic behaviour.”

This backed up evidence from the Equality and Human Rights Commission showing trans people experience severe and persistent disadvantage in accessing appropriate health care.

But the RCN is fighting to change this. Guy has worked with Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to deliver training to local public sector organisations so they can provide better services to trans people. This has been so successful the trust is now one of LGBT rights charity Stonewall’s “star performers”.



A key part of the Equality Act is not being upheld

Download the RCN guidance *Fair care for trans patients* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

You can also benefit from the RCN’s expertise by downloading the updated guidance, *Fair care for trans patients*, which is now available on the RCN website.

The guidance is relevant to all nursing staff, students included. As Guy explains: “People on placement will often be unsure of how to deal with trans patients, but it’s not rocket science. There are some simple things you can do to ensure you practise inclusively.”

Guy’s top tips

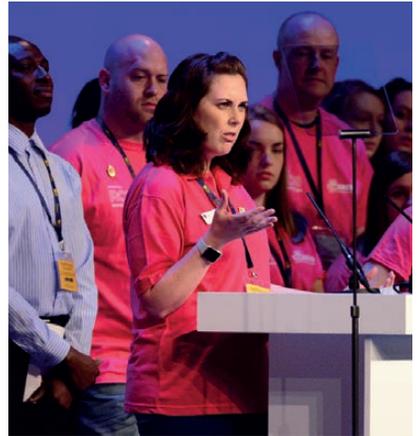
- Be positive and proactive in your approach to welcoming trans patients to your care.
- If you’re unsure about a person’s gender identity, politely ask how they would like to be addressed.
- Getting terminology right is important. Use trans or non-binary instead of transgender, which is seen as an outdated legislative term. Similarly, refer to someone’s “true gender” rather than their “desired gender”.
- Discuss issues related to a patient’s gender identity in private and with care and sensitivity.
- Avoid disclosing a patient’s trans status to anyone who does not explicitly need to know.
- Always treat trans patients in a respectful way, as you would any other patient or client – if you do this you won’t go far wrong.

Right place, right time

Going to RCN Congress but don't know what to expect? Our handy guide picks out the best bits for students

Passionate debates

The debates are where members shape the RCN's priorities for the coming months and years – they're the backbone not just of Congress, but the entire organisation. Anyone can speak, and delegates often talk passionately about subjects close to their hearts (see right) – so it's definitely worth having a look at the agenda and picking out a few debates that interest you. They start on Sunday morning, and the second item scheduled is a discussion on reducing student nurses' clinical placement hours – so if this gets you fired up, come along and speak up!



Check out the fringe

Running alongside the debates is a programme of events covering all manner of nursing topics. There are several events dedicated to students, including sessions on trauma patients, nursing in the military and abroad, and advice for those approaching registration. There's also a play by Company of Friends, a drama group from Liverpool made up of people with learning disabilities. Meanwhile, the Nursing Showoff on Monday evening promises "a night of chaotic cabaret, exploring nursing as an art, science, practice and public concern".

Socialise

Socialising is a big part of Congress – it's where lifelong friendships and lasting memories are made. The opening ceremony and reception on Saturday evening is a chance to grab a glass of wine and wander round the UK's largest nursing exhibition (hint: this is also a great opportunity to network with potential employers). Get on your dancing shoes for the students' social on Sunday evening, and see out the week in style on Tuesday at the annual dinner and disco – don't forget to check your Congress welcome pack for your free drinks voucher.

...but don't just take our word for it

RCN Students Committee member Georgina Ledwith shares her experience of attending Congress last year:

"I met so many inspirational nurses and health care professionals. Everyone was so friendly and it genuinely felt like we were all a family and caring was in everyone's genetics. It was great to meet other student nurses and we were encouraged to get involved with the debates – I even got up to speak during a debate on nurses' pay. My first Congress experience was phenomenal – all week I felt like I was in the right place at the right time."

Find a full list of fringe events and debates, plus everything else you need to know about Congress, at www.rcn.org.uk/congress

Roads less travelled

Looking outside a hospital's four walls can broaden your career horizons, as Lynne Pearce finds out



Once there was a well-trodden path followed by almost all newly registered nurses, beginning with a first job on an acute hospital ward.

“But it’s changing,” says RCN Employment Relations Adviser Clare Jacobs, with registrants encouraged to explore other avenues, including primary care and the independent sector. “Career paths are shifting, but perhaps not at the rate they could be, although the openings are there in quantity,” says Clare. “There are some superb opportunities for today’s students.”

For those who fear their 12-month preceptorship may not match the same high standard as a hospital employer, Clare believes the reverse may be true, with many programmes in the independent sector accredited by the RCN.

“I’d argue you get a better experience,” she says. “In the community or a care home, it’s more likely to be holistic, where you’ll see someone for much longer than over a few days

on an exceptionally busy acute ward. You’re able to get to know them and understand the complexity of their needs, developing a much more robust consolidation of your training.”

Kathryn Yates, the RCN’s Professional Lead for Primary and Community Care, agrees the bias towards secondary care as a “first destination” still exists, but is gradually shifting. And while general practices may not be able to provide large numbers of placements, they can offer a high quality experience for students, opening their eyes to this option as a potential career choice.

“For me, the bottom line is if you haven’t seen it, how can you consider it?” says Kathryn. “If you haven’t had the experience of working in general practice, you don’t know what you’re missing.” She recommends students interested in a career in general practice or district and community nursing should ask their universities what placements they offer in these settings. “If students create the demand, more opportunities may emerge,” she adds.

Seeking alternatives

For students looking beyond a placement or first job on a hospital ward, here are some other suggestions.

Care homes with nursing

“This is the largest nurse-led service in the UK,” says Clare. “For newly registered nurses, it provides an excellent opportunity to put all that theory into practice in hands-on one-to-one care, consolidating your learning in the fundamentals of holistic care.” Career development opportunities include palliative care, wound management, living with dementia, continence management, nurse prescribing and leadership.

Independent providers of mental health services

Employers including the Huntercombe Group, Priory Partnerships in Care and Elysium offer students and newly registered nurses the chance to gain experience across a full range of acute and enduring mental health conditions, including eating disorders and psychosis.

Independent sector primary and community care providers

These range from large organisations – such as Virgin and One Medical Group – to many smaller community interest companies or social enterprises, offering a range of community nursing roles. Some offer posts for newly registered nurses with preceptorship.

Practice makes perfect choice

Seeing patients in hospital with preventable conditions inspired Lucy Mitchell to choose practice nursing. “Patients had complications from long-term illnesses caused by things like smoking. It started me thinking about a role where I could help people before they got to that point. I felt it was hugely important,” says Lucy.

She asked her tutors at Greenwich University to help her find a practice nursing placement in her final year. “I wanted to find out if it was for me,” says Lucy. “I knew what being a nurse on a ward involved, but much less about the role of a practice nurse.”

After spending 14 weeks on placement in a health centre within the area covered by NHS Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), supported by a workforce tutor, Lucy says: “I had no doubts afterwards that’s what I wanted to do. The most surprising thing is the variety – they call it general practice for a very good reason. I hadn’t realised the breadth of knowledge practice nurses have.”

Fortunately, when she qualified in January this year, the practice offered her a post, and she is now on a six-month long introductory course, involving 10 study days, plus distance learning. “As I complete training on different aspects, such as immunisation, I incorporate them into my day-to-day practice,” says Lucy. “I’m so happy about my choice and excited about the future.”

A change of scene

Nursing can take you all over the world. For those of you with itchy feet, a fringe event at this year’s RCN Congress will offer an exciting insight into defence nursing and overseas relief work. RCN Students Committee member Beth Salmon, who is helping to organise the event, said: “It’s about raising awareness about the many opportunities nursing can present to you. There’s so much you can do, and so many areas of nursing you might not have even thought about. It’s all about broadening horizons.” Find out more at www.rcn.org.uk/congress

A place to live, not to die

Second-year adult nursing student George Brown on how a placement in a hospice brought about a change in perspective

I wasn't looking forward to my placement in a hospice, if I'm perfectly honest. All I could think about was being surrounded by death, and that I would be failing my patients because there would be nothing I could do for them. But now, several weeks into my placement, I've done an about-turn.

The first thing to strike me was the difference in pace compared with my previous placements. Having worked on hospital wards before, I was used to rushing around, trying to get everything done at breakneck speed because it felt like there were a million things to do. But on the ward at the hospice it was completely different. It was quiet. It was relaxed. People weren't rushing about. There wasn't a kerfuffle at every nurses' station.

Nurses and HCAs visited each patient and introduced themselves to those who were awake, but if they were sleeping, they were left to sleep. Patients weren't just washed; they were asked if they wanted to have a wash. And nurses actually had time to do this essential personal care along with the HCAs. There was a definite sense of unity; it was about working together to make the patients happy and comfortable.

It's been an eye-opening experience for me. Not least when I first saw the drinks trolley, which visits the ward every day with a selection of alcoholic beverages for patients to choose from should they fancy a tippie.

This was something I'd never seen before. I was taken aback at first, but then again, when you have patients with life-limiting conditions traditional



Hospices are not places we should fear

health promotion goes out the window. The emphasis is on enjoying what remains of life, and if that means having a gin and tonic then why the hell not?

As a student nurse, I've been able to practise my nursing calculations and clinical skills, but I've also been able to work on how to appropriately support both patients and their families through one of the hardest times they can ever face.

Despite this, it's become clear to me that hospices are not places we should fear. They are not where people go to end their lives. They are places full of compassion, support and unity, allowing patients to enjoy the rest of their lives, however long they may be.

Join the RCN's specialist nursing forum for pain and palliative care at www.rcn.org.uk/forums

Amanda Cheesley, RCN Professional Lead for Long-Term Conditions and End of Life Care, says: "A placement in a hospice can completely transform your perspective of death and dying, as well as reinforce the importance of providing compassionate, person-centred care."

Struggling against stereotypes

Why aren't more men attracted to a career in nursing? Second-year student Geraint Hughes shares his experience

Exciting, dynamic, challenging, highs, lows and everything in between. All in a day's work. Sounds like a normal shift for a nurse, right?

Ask any young man if he would be interested in having a career in that sort of environment and he would probably say yes. But ask him if he's ever considered being a nurse and the answer is likely to be no.

Why is nursing not commonly considered as a career for young men?

Traditionally nursing and the tasks it entailed were seen as "feminine". But this view is outdated. On a daily basis, a nurse may be setting up IV drips, liaising with doctors, dressing wounds, carrying out assessments, referrals, injections, blood tests and countless other tasks that both sexes can do equally well.

So with this in mind, why is only one in ten nurses male (11.4% according to the latest figures from the NMC)?

Job satisfaction

When I tell people I entered nursing as a 25-year-old man I'm usually met with surprised expressions and raised eyebrows.

Yet very few professions provide the opportunity to experience such a high level of job satisfaction. When a patient thanks you for brightening their day, there is no better feeling than knowing you've really made a difference.

No two days are ever the same, and no two wards are the same. There are so



According to the NMC, only one in ten nurses is male



Male nurses
are often seen
as a curiosity



Geraint Hughes

many differing nursing specialties; there is truly something for everyone.

Mental health and A&E roles can be seen as "masculine" due to the perceived excitement and danger they entail. But the rest of us male nurses are often seen as a curiosity.

Not enough is being done to challenge the public perception of nursing as a "soft" career for men, and I believe this is the main reason why men are not entering the profession in greater numbers.

For far too long nursing has not been considered as a career choice for young men, and a change of mind-set is needed to open up the profession. Health care providers should be actively seeking to increase the number of male nurses to reflect society.

My journey to becoming a registered nurse has been amazing so far. I hope more young men will share my experience and choose nursing as a career in the future.

Knowledge is power

Alan Chalkley from the RCN library on how to make the most of its website and online resources for your studies



There are RCN libraries in London, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff, but if you're not near one of these then don't worry. Our library website – www.rcn.org.uk/library – is a gateway to a huge number of online resources.

Access books and journals

We now offer up to 30,000 e-books and around 1,100 online nursing journals. Accessing them is simple; you just need to enter your RCN membership number and surname when prompted. If you have any difficulties, please do not hesitate to get in touch – see below for ways to contact us.

Find what you need

Nursing students need to learn how to search for and evaluate quality evidence. Our library search tool can assist with this. It's easy to use, so you can carry out quick searches and use the filters to narrow down your requirements – for example, you can choose between books and journal articles, or look for peer-reviewed material.

Specialist subjects

We have a growing range of online subject guides which provide an introduction to key nursing topics. The guides are simple to use and can be accessed 24/7. Each one suggests links to key resources, books and journals relating to that topic, with links through to the online library.

Referencing made easy

Referencing is an essential skill for nursing students to learn, but if you're in need of a shortcut the online library's handy "cite" tool will automatically generate a reference for you – there's a range of formats to choose from, including Harvard.

Libraries across the UK

Our four libraries are staffed by a team of information professionals who can support you to find what you need. The libraries are great places to come to study and get help – and access up to 54,000 books. We also have an ongoing programme of events and exhibitions where you can engage with nursing history and our special collections.

Stay in touch

We have an active social media presence – follow us on Twitter [@rcnlibraries](https://twitter.com/rcnlibraries). And don't forget to check out our YouTube video tutorials which cover a number of library-related topics – you can view these on the library website or the RCNOnline YouTube channel. You can also contact us on 0345 337 3368, by email at rcn.library@rcn.org.uk or via our webchat service (Monday to Saturday, 9am to 5pm).

Home sweet home

From costs to contracts, looking for accommodation can be a stressful time. But with RCN help it doesn't have to be

Around this time of year many of you will be thinking about your housing arrangements for the next academic year.

Finding your own accommodation can seem like a daunting prospect. There are legal contracts and deposits to consider, and competition for properties can be fierce, which can make it time-consuming.

Rebecca, a second-year mental health nursing student at the University of Brighton, recalls her first foray into house hunting.

“I spent my first year on campus in halls, but they were only for first-year students so in the spring I had to start thinking about finding a new house for September. I was in the middle of a placement, so finding time to visit properties with my potential new housemates was quite challenging,” she says.

Fortunately for Rebecca and others like her, RCN help was at hand, as Claire Cannings, RCN Senior Welfare Adviser, explains.

“The RCN’s Student Money Guide has a wealth of useful pointers, tips and checklists to help you consider your options and costs when weighing up your housing needs,” says Claire.

“From information about tenancy agreements and deposits, to printable checklists for when you view and move into properties, the housing section of the guide has everything you need to make the moving process as quick and hassle-free as possible.”



Handy housing hints

- Take a checklist with you when you go to view properties; it won't take long to fill in and will help you decide if it's the right place for you.
- Never pay any holding deposits without seeing the property first, no matter how desperate you feel.
- Accommodation costs aren't just about rent; make sure you consider things like upfront agency fees, deposits and bills before committing to a contract.
- Once you have signed the contract, you will need to ensure any inventory is carried out fairly. Never sign an inventory unless you have fully viewed and tested the items listed.

Download the *Student Money Guide* at www.rcn.org.uk/money-guide

A chance to influence

Nursing students have the opportunity to shape the RCN's trade union and professional work

What's this all about?

The RCN is creating two new committees, the Trade Union Committee and Professional Nursing Committee. They'll represent all countries and regions of the UK, as well as nursing students and health care support workers.

What's in it for me?

You'll be involved in shaping the future of the nursing profession, working with experienced nurse leaders to influence the UK nursing agenda. It's the sort of experience that's only available to a handful of nursing students, so having something like this on your CV will really make you stand out to employers. It'll demonstrate a passion for nursing that'll give you the edge over other students when it comes to securing that all-important first job.

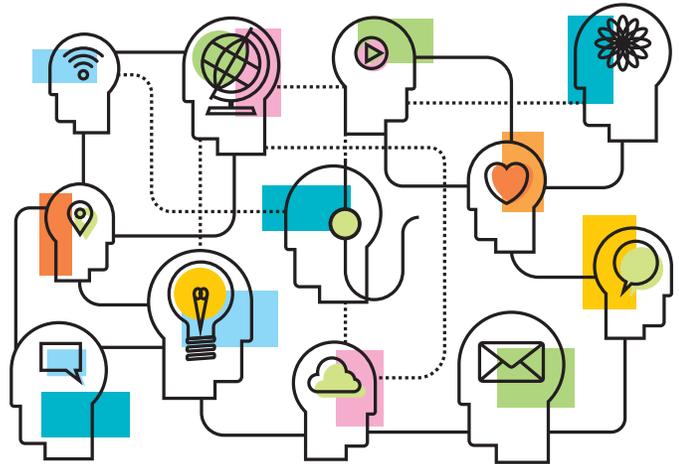
What will I do?

The Professional Nursing Committee will work to strengthen the professional side of the RCN, developing policy and promoting best practice. As a member, you'll help ensure the RCN remains the recognised voice of nursing locally, nationally and around the world.

On the Trade Union Committee you'll be shaping the UK's future nursing workforce and making a positive difference to your colleagues' working lives.

What experience do I need?

The successful candidate for the Trade Union Committee will have a passion for activism. Perhaps you're an RCN student information officer, or you've been involved with your student union or the NUS? Maybe you've sat on a



student-staff committee at university, or taken part in an RCN campaign? If so, this could be the committee for you.

For the Professional Nursing Committee, you'll need a good understanding of the challenges facing nursing and their impact on care, knowledge of issues facing nursing and nurse education, and an awareness of nursing research and its application. Above all, you'll need to show enthusiasm for the profession, a determination to make a difference and be a strong advocate for the profession.

How do I get involved?

Nominations for both committees open on Saturday 13 May. To put yourself forward, you'll need to be supported by two other student members. You'll also need to provide a 250-word statement outlining how you meet the requirements of the role. Nomination forms, and further information about the committees and election procedures, are available at www.rcn.org.uk/elections

Your RCN Students Committee

Helping to shape the nursing education agenda and RCN policy

STUDENT MEMBERS OF COUNCIL



Kathryn Davies
(Chair)



Charlotte Hall

COUNTRY AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES



Charlotte Callow
Eastern



Simon Mackey
Northern Ireland



Colin Revell
South West



Laura Sowerby
East Midlands



Lee Holden-Levett
North West



Francesca Elnor
Wales



Georgina Ledwith
London



Sinead McLean
Scotland



Matthew Thomas
Wales



Emillie Miller
Northern



Ellie Mulreany
Scotland



Sophie Lynn
West Midlands



Joleen McKee
Northern Ireland



Beth Salmon
South East



Rhys Mood
(Vice Chair)
Yorkshire
& The Humber

Make your mark

The RCN Students Committee is run by students for students, and makes the student voice heard on the issues that matter.

If you're passionate about making a difference, then why not put yourself forward? Elections will take place later this year for committee seats in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as the Eastern, East Midlands, Northern and South West regions in England.

Nominations for all seats will open at RCN Congress. For more information keep an eye on www.rcn.org.uk/elections



Contact your student committee representative via students@rcn.org.uk

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



For 100 years, we've had the privilege of supporting and protecting the nursing team within the UK. And as a student, we want to let you know what RCN membership can do for you.

- Access to the RCN libraries and e-library www.rcn.org.uk/library
- Careers coaching and online careers resources www.rcn.org.uk/career
- Student Money Guide, sponsored by Lighthouse Financial Advice www.rcn.org.uk/students
- An accredited counselling service providing support for personal or work related issues
- Benefits advice and case work
- Immigration advice
- Peer support group for students suffering from ill health or disability-related issues
- *Starting your career* book – a guide for newly registered nurses*
- RCNXtra online benefits scheme www.rcn.org.uk/xtra
- Events, courses and publications
- The largest legal team of any union in the UK
- 35 professional forums

Get involved

You can make a difference by playing an active role in the RCN. Join our local network of student information officers or get involved in discussions in the RCN student Facebook group. You can also stand for election for the RCN UK Students Committee
www.rcn.org.uk/students

**Starting your career* is sent to newly registered nurse members in their first year of registration with the NMC.