

# Activate

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## News, views and support for RCN activists



## Protest highlights ongoing funding crisis

**The Chancellor missed an opportunity in the Budget to give the NHS the level of investment it needs, the RCN has said, just days after members joined thousands of people marching through London protesting about NHS cuts**

The RCN has welcomed the financial support for NHS sustainability and transformation plans (STPs) announced in the Budget but warned the Government needs to clarify how many plans will be supported by this limited pot of money and guarantee that it will be channelled into struggling community services. STPs, designed to change the way health and care services are delivered in England, were denounced by organisers of the London march as a smokescreen for further cuts.

The RCN described the extra support promised in the Budget for experienced clinicians to triage patients in A&E

departments as “a sticking plaster”. Proper investment in social care may help hospitals to discharge patients when medically ready and better support older and vulnerable people in their own homes, but it needs to be organised in a way which integrates health and social care.

RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary Janet Davies said: “Hospitals and community services are chronically understaffed and nurses are working unpaid overtime to hold things together. The Budget has done nothing to keep patient services staffed at the right level for safe care and nothing to value nursing staff after six years of real-terms cuts to their pay.”

An announcement on the pay award for nursing staff is expected later this month. Read more about STPs on page 2. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts](http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts)

## Violence debate

The concerns of RCN reps were noted in last month's debate in Westminster Hall on making it a specific offence to assault an NHS worker. Oliver Dowden MP and Liz McInnes MP specifically mentioned the evidence the RCN UK Safety Representatives Committee had provided.

There was no vote following the debate but the Government representative pledged to review current processes and to meet with the Director of Public Prosecutions. The RCN will be keeping a close eye on developments and is planning further work on the issue of work-related violence. Read more at <http://tiny.cc/staffassaults> and listen to the debate at <https://goo.gl/n8SxLX>

Read the new LRD Publications booklet *Protecting Workers From Violence and Abuse – A Union Rep's Guide* at [www.lrdpublications.org.uk/publications.php?pub=BK](http://www.lrdpublications.org.uk/publications.php?pub=BK)

## STPs must be properly funded, RCN insists

The RCN has warned that plans to reorganise NHS services in England must not be used to disguise cuts. The College agrees with the aspiration for greater integration of health and social care, and more collaborative working, but says that if reducing costs is the primary driver for sustainability and transformation plans (STPs) they will not meet the health needs of the communities they are responsible for.

The value placed on the nursing workforce and safe staffing levels will be crucial, said Josie Irwin, RCN Head of Employment Relations. "We won't support the implementation of STPs that compromise patient access to safe,

dignified, compassionate nursing care," she said. "We expect each STP to involve RCN officers and nursing staff in the development of the clinical and workforce implementation plans for their area."

She added: "Staff are critical to the success of STPs. As the plans are developed and implemented we expect staff and their representative organisations to be consulted and involved. Employer support is needed for effective local union representation for staff affected by change."

Visit <http://tiny.cc/stps>



### Checklist

- **Keep yourself informed:** discuss your local STP with your RCN mentor.
- **Lobby:** get yourself on STP social partnership forums and workforce planning groups.
- **Discuss:** make sure STP updates are on every agenda of your organisation's social partnership forum.
- **Communicate:** tell members how important this is.

## Success at Brighterkind but pay campaign continues

RCN members have voted to accept a pay rise offered by Brighterkind. The RCN negotiated an offer of a rise of between 1.5% and 3.6% for those under 25 who had not received an uplift since April 2016. Brighterkind has also agreed to introduce a long service recognition scheme, work with unions to develop a Brighterkind pay structure, and reduce spending on agencies.

RCN lead negotiator Clare Jacobs said: "These were complicated negotiations but we are pleased to have reached this agreement. However, the RCN continues to campaign for the Real Living Wage to underpin all basic pay in health and social care as the absolute minimum and strive for better pay, terms and working conditions for all our members."

For information on rates of pay and the differences between the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage, visit [www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1902](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1902)

## Break in service as new member system launches

This month the RCN is launching a new system that will help the College support and improve communications with members.

From 14 March, some RCN online services, including the steward's portal, MyRCN, the Learning Zone, event booking and the member communication centre, will be unavailable for a number of days.

The RCN's telephone service and the membership administration department will also be closed during this time. If members need urgent assistance they will be able to leave a telephone message and the advice team will call them back.

The "Get help" section ([www.rcn.org.uk/get-help](http://www.rcn.org.uk/get-help)) on the RCN website will remain available, so members can continue to access a range of advice topics, and contact the RCN using the online form.

## 'Bring bullying issues to the top table'

RCN reps are being urged to use the results from the NHS England staff survey, out last week, to help tackle workplace bullying.

The NHS Social Partnership Forum (SPF) has issued a collective call to action to address bullying in England.

"Reps can be at the centre of this campaign by bringing the issues to the top table. Check the bullying figures for your trust and take these, along with the SPF work, to your JNCC [Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee]," said Josie Irwin, RCN Head of Employment Relations.

"The SPF is focusing on organisational culture and bullying at the very top of organisations and is looking to achieve overarching leadership and cultural change. They've emphasised the importance of local partnership working so make sure you ask questions or sign up to the call to action."

Read more about dignity in the workplace at <http://tiny.cc/healthyworkplaces> and for support on asking questions download *Ask. Listen. Act.* from <http://tiny.cc/asklistenact>

Visit <http://tiny.cc/nhsbullying>



### Under pressure

The RCN says the NHS England Staff Survey 2016 shows the immense pressure nursing staff are under, particularly due to understaffing. Janet Davies, RCN General Secretary, said: "This is another reminder for the Government of how NHS staff across the board are straining to hold things together."

- Almost half believe there are not enough staff for them to do their job properly.
- One third feel unwell due to work-related stress.
- One in six experienced violence from patients.
- Nearly one in six work unpaid overtime each week.

## Congress agenda

Debates at Congress this year promise to be exciting. The recently published agenda includes a discussion on the risks of employers failing to support mandatory training, proposed by the RCN UK Learning Representatives Committee, and a debate on supporting members with dementia to continue nursing, proposed by the RCN Older People's Forum. Suggestions for potential emergency agenda items can now be submitted by RCN boards, branches, forums or representative committee members. To help encourage members to attend, you can order a Congress leaflet (code 005 874) and poster (code 005 875) from [publications@rcn.org.uk](mailto:publications@rcn.org.uk). Book your place today at [www.rcn.org.uk/congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress)

## LRD Publications

The way that RCN activists access LRD (Labour Research Department) Publications has changed. The website is available to all RCN activists. Email [rcn.library@rcn.org.uk](mailto:rcn.library@rcn.org.uk) or call 0345 337 3368, quoting your RCN membership number, for log in details.

## Nursing associates

Activists in England are asked to ensure trainee nursing associates know they can join the RCN by displaying a new RCN leaflet and poster in their workplaces. To order, email [publications@rcn.org.uk](mailto:publications@rcn.org.uk) quoting 005908 for the poster, 005909 for the leaflet, and 005911 for the nursing associate application form.

## CBE congratulations for Cecilia

RCN President Cecilia Anim collected her CBE from the Queen last month. She was named in the new year's honours list in recognition of her work for the RCN over the last three decades, as a nurse specialist in the field of sexual health, and as a leader in her community.

Cecilia was elected the RCN's first BME (black and minority ethnic) president in 2014, having served four years as vice president. She has been active in the RCN for more than 30 years as a steward and council member.



In her professional career, she has led advances in the field of women's sexual and reproductive health, particularly around family planning and the menopause. Her community work includes being chair of governors at her local primary school for the last 15 years, and active involvement in her local church.

Cecilia originally worked as a midwife in Ghana, before moving to the UK and qualifying as a nurse in 1977.

## 'Get in the know'



### **Make sure you're at this year's AGM, says RCN President Cecilia Anim**

Some meetings can shape your future. The RCN's annual general meeting (AGM) is coming up and this is one of the meetings that I would urge you to attend. Don't be put off by its name, this meeting is about you and the future of nursing.

If you want to get in the know about the RCN, please come along. You'll hear first-hand about Council's annual report. It's also where you'll find out details about where your membership subscription is being spent. There will be no resolutions or voting at this year's AGM so there will be ample time to discuss the most important professional issues facing us all right now.

If the idea of yet another meeting doesn't leave you feeling enthused, I completely understand. Meeting fatigue can be an unfortunate side effect of our increasingly busy lives. But the RCN is a member-led organisation. It's members who elect Council to govern the RCN on its behalf and the AGM is a chance for you to hold Council to account by asking questions or raising concerns about the organisation's performance.

The AGM is completely separate from RCN Congress, which takes place in the same venue in the same week. However, activists who are funded to attend Congress are expected to attend the AGM. But even if you don't have funding, please get it in your diary. This is your College. You build it, you sustain it, and you can shape it.

The next AGM takes place on 16 May.

*"This is your College"*

## ASK AN ADVISER



### Jury service



### **I have been called for jury service. Can I refuse or delay it?**

In England and Wales you must do jury service when you are asked. You can request to defer your jury duty until a more convenient time but you can only do this once. It is very difficult to be totally excused from jury service. If the court doesn't accept your request you are obliged to serve as a juror. If you fail to attend you could be fined £1,000.

In Scotland and Northern Ireland, practising registered nurses have the right to be excused from jury service once they have provided evidence to the court. Visit <http://tiny.cc/nidirectjury> and <http://tiny.cc/scottishjury> for further information.

Your employer doesn't have to pay you unless this is specified in your contract of employment but you can claim for loss of earnings from the court. You are also entitled to claim other expenses such as travel, food and drink. More information is available at [www.rcn.org.uk/get-help](http://www.rcn.org.uk/get-help)

**For more information, speak in confidence to an RCN Direct adviser any time between 8.30am and 8.30pm, 365 days per year.**

**RCN DIRECT**  
[www.rcn.org.uk/direct](http://www.rcn.org.uk/direct)  
**0345 772 6100**

## View from the frontline



### Celebrating equality and diversity

I feel privileged to be the chair of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Staff Network at my trust. We promote equality within the workplace and for our patients. We also act as a critical friend to the organisation if discrimination happens. We empower staff to ask questions and challenge issues that seem out of place or non-inclusive, and provide information and support to all those who need it.

Our trust celebrated LGBT History Month for the first time this year and it was a great success. We had screensavers promoting the network and we took over the equality and diversity noticeboards, focusing on the achievements of the LGBT community within health care. Alongside our union partners we also ran an online survey canvassing people's thoughts, feelings and experiences of diversity and inclusion in the trust.

Another feature of the celebrations was a daily email to staff highlighting the work of many famous LGBT people. We had some great responses from staff and started many positive conversations about LGBT issues and inclusion. We had some fun too. We put a flyer in everyone's payslips to invite them to an event at the end of the month where we celebrated the diversity of our organisation.

I'm proud to be part of this network. We're here to ensure staff are treated equally and with respect. This allows everyone to flourish and provide the best possible care for our patients.

**Stuart Young, RCN activist**

## LEGAL UPDATE



### Work-related stress



To be protected by the disability provisions of the Equality Act, the claimant must have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Each element of the definition is critical.

*Herry v Dudley*

*Metropolitan Council (2017)* is a reminder that you are not protected unless you produce evidence of how conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression satisfy the test.

Mr Herry was absent from work long term because of sickness, producing certificates referring to either "stress" or "work-related stress and anxiety".

The tribunal held that he had failed to produce evidence to show his conditions had an adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

### Defining mental impairments

Mr Herry was considered physically and mentally fit for work and he received no medication for his stress, which was related to a perception of unfair treatment at work.

The Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) said: "Unhappiness with a decision or a colleague, a tendency to nurse grievances, or a refusal to compromise are not of themselves mental impairments: they may simply reflect a person's character or personality."

The EAT rejected his appeal. They said the tribunal had correctly drawn a distinction between a mental impairment which was a disability, and a reaction to life events.

The fact that an adverse reaction causes a long period off work is not conclusive proof of the existence of a mental impairment.

**Chris Cox**  
RCN Director of Membership Relations

## Ready for action

RCN reps from across the UK discussed the workplace challenges they are facing now and what they may see in the future at the RCN Joint Representatives Conference at the beginning of the month

### 'Get political'

Addressing the conference RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary Janet Davies acknowledged the impact of huge financial pressures on working conditions for members in the NHS and independent sector. It's the RCN's job to be critical of the Government, she said as she stressed the importance of lobbying to get properly funded care.

She reflected on the RCN's pay campaign and urged reps to get political. She said she was proud that it was an RCN member who initiated the petition which led to the Parliamentary debate at the end of January and that more members than ever before had got involved.

The General Secretary also highlighted the link between assaults in the workplace, staffing levels and the current financial crisis.

RCN Director of Membership Relations Chris Cox addressed some of the issues the RCN may face in 2020 and beyond as he updated conference delegates on the RCN's current work on the value of reps.



The next RCN Joint Representatives Conference will be held on 19 and 20 October. Look out for details at [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)



### 'No magic solutions'

Keynote speaker Dr Elizabeth Cotton talked about surviving work and improving working lives. She said there were no magic solutions but emphasised the importance of talking to one another.

### Consult widely

Reps at the conference told RCN Head of Employment Relations Josie Irwin that the RCN must consult members on important issues, such as pay, as widely as possible. Face-to-face discussions and social media both have uses. Reps want the RCN to be a militant, radical and different voice.



### Raising concerns

The RCN's new guidance on raising concerns was launched by Jennie Stanley who shared her experience and the impact that blowing the whistle had on her and her family. She showed that it is possible to move on from a profoundly negative experience. She said she would "do it again", despite everything. Her powerful session stimulated good questions in the panel discussion that followed. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/raisingconcerns](http://www.rcn.org.uk/raisingconcerns)

### 'Absolutely fantastic'

"This was my first joint reps conference and it was absolutely fantastic. There's so much negativity in our workplaces right now but I left feeling enthused. I feel passionate about the work we do as reps, so this conference was where I needed to be. I came away knowing that I was not on my own. I now have people to turn to and many resources to refer to. Would I recommend the conference to other reps? Without a doubt."

Nasreen Rafiq, West Midlands representative on the RCN UK Stewards Committee



## Can you be a hydration hero?



### Nursing staff are used to telling patients about the importance of having enough to drink, but reps can make sure staff are looked after too

Recent research by the University of Nottingham found the judgement of nursing staff was impaired because they do not drink enough during their shifts. Almost half of the nurses and doctors who completed the study were dehydrated at the end of a shift. A link was also found between dehydration and cognitive function, which could potentially affect performance and patient safety.

Geoffrey Walker, Chair of the RCN Dorset Branch, says that staff in the emergency department in his trust found they weren't getting enough water, particularly in the summer. "Staff here work in an extremely busy and pressurised environment, and they felt anxious about when they could drink and what was allowed. Nursing staff would often miss breaks because there was just so much work to do."

Geoffrey, who is a matron at Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, said nursing staff had never

been stopped from drinking while they were working, but inevitably leaving water bottles and cups of tea around did cause a mess. "They were often knocked over and had the potential to be used as a weapon by patients," he adds.

### Solution

A charge nurse in the emergency department came up with the idea of using water bottles that could be personalised with the hospital logo and the name of each member of staff on them. Geoffrey gave the idea his full support because he says that everyone needed to be able to drink, especially as some staff were working 12-hour shifts. "These bottles look professional in the department and they show our commitment to encouraging staff to keep hydrated. Staff are given these bottles when they join and now fill them at the start of their shift."

And this simple idea has had a big impact. "We shared the idea on the emergency care network and several hospitals have since been in touch and are using the idea themselves."

### Legislation

If hydration is an issue in your workplace, what can you do? "Reps can remind employers that they have a legal duty under workplace regulations to provide access to drinking water," says Lesley Pallett, Vice Chair of the RCN UK Safety Representatives Committee. "Staff must be given access to it, and given the time to access it, otherwise employers could be breaching that regulation. A well-hydrated nurse is a safer nurse."

### Nutrition and Hydration Week

Taking place between 13 and 19 March, Nutrition and Hydration Week 2017 promotes staff awareness of their own hydration and nutritional requirements. The campaign literature suggests nutrition advocates in each workplace could continuously promote and enhance good nutrition, including hydration, for all employees. Safety reps can help by introducing nutrition and hydration promotion strategies that encourage and improve the health and wellbeing of employees and those they care for. Visit [www.nutritionandhydrationweek.co.uk](http://www.nutritionandhydrationweek.co.uk)

Read about the RCN campaign *Healthy Workplace, Healthy You* at <http://tiny.cc/healthyworkplace>

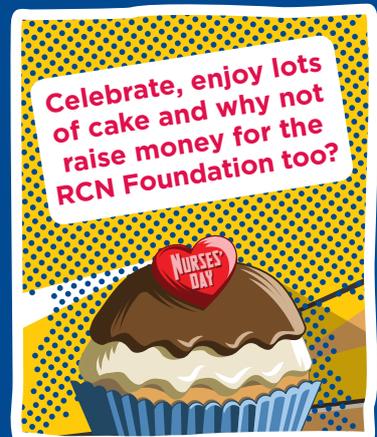
# NOTICEBOARD



#nurseheroes



Promote your event using the posters and on social media: #nurseheroes



## Tools of the trade



A range of information on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality in the workplace is available from NHS Employers. Visit <http://tiny.cc/diverseworkforce>

A case study of how University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Trust aims to become an inclusive employer, and the ways their programme engages with staff from differing groups, is available at <http://tiny.cc/inclusion>

A review examining return to work after cancer provides evidence for the use of a range of good

practice to help people stay in, or return to, work. Visit <http://tiny.cc/workaftercancer>

A BMJ report has found shift work is linked with an increase in accidents, type 2 diabetes, weight gain, coronary heart disease, stroke and cancer. Visit [www.bmj.com/content/355/bmj.i5210](http://www.bmj.com/content/355/bmj.i5210)

The latest issue of *Learning Rep* is out now. The Union Learn publication focuses on apprenticeships and features an interview with the Skills Minister. Visit <http://tiny.cc/learningrep>

## Apply now for Mary Seacole awards



development awards provide up to £6,250 to make positive and lasting contributions that address health inequalities. The leadership awards of up to £12,500 emphasise Mary Seacole's pioneering role in leadership.

If you're thinking of applying and would like to find out more, you can attend one of the pre-application workshops organised by the RCN in London on 23 March or Birmingham on 28 March. The deadline for applications is 5 May.

If shortlisted, you'll be asked to attend an interview. Visit <http://tiny.cc/seacole> for more information.

Members in England registered with the NMC who work in a publicly-funded health care service can apply to fund a project that aims to improve the health outcomes of people from black and minority ethnic communities. The

## Could you lead your forum?

You only have until 4.30pm on 17 March to return your nomination form for the RCN forum chair elections. There are vacancies on the following RCN forum steering committees:

- Advanced Nurse Practitioner
- CYP: Professional Issues
- Continence Care
- District Nursing
- ENT – Maxillofacial Nursing
- Ophthalmic Nursing
- Perioperative

great opportunity to provide leadership to your forum. We're looking for effective communicators who will make sure their forums are represented at a UK level. If you want to help shape and influence national nursing policy, this is the role for you."

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

Jason Warriner, Chair of RCN Forum Chairs, said: "This is a really

