



RCN
ACTIVATE

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FOR RCN ACTIVE MEMBERS ACROSS THE UK

SPRING 2021



TALKING ABOUT TRAUMA

FRASER'S HELPING MEMBERS WORKING IN CARE HOMES
MANAGE EXPERIENCES OF TRAUMA DURING THE PANDEMIC

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One full year into the pandemic and we are all reflecting on what's changed and what hasn't. The greatest changes to our working and personal lives scarcely need listing. The biggest changes to the RCN, you can find out more about in this issue. But what hasn't changed yet? The views of politicians on how to treat, reward, pay and respect our members.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, members across the UK have demonstrated what a highly-skilled and dedicated profession nursing is. The public has seen the true and very tangible value of nursing and that's why they are standing with us more than ever before. When the government in Westminster signalled a 1% pay award for NHS staff in England, you were outraged and your elected Council acted quickly to condemn this plan and to back up our words with a £35 million industrial action fund - the largest of any UK trade union. We are

determined to be ready should members wish to take action.

Members in Scotland are currently being consulted on a pay offer from government – one that the RCN does not think is anything like good enough. It's important that members have their say on this (see page 5).

We're at the first stage of developing our own "organising model" to engage, educate and empower members to be a force for change in their workplaces and we're inviting members to sign up for expert training now (see page 18). Paying nursing staff fairly is a political choice. We've demonstrated what a 12.5% increase would mean to our members and how affordable it is (see page 17). With today's workforce crisis, their plan is a false economy that drives even more people out the door. Politicians across the UK should know that we will continue campaigning for fair pay for nursing staff across all health and care settings. Nursing must be valued.

You, our most active members, know the power of collective action. Members are angry. But for the first time, as your union, we are saying "Don't get angry – get organised." Turn to page 18 to find out more.

Dave Dawes
RCN Chair of Council

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Don't forget, this is your magazine. If you've got a story to share, tell us at the email above.

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4 UPDATE

Nurses' Day



Join us and get involved in Nurses' Day on 12 May.

To find out more, and download or order materials, visit rcn.org.uk/nursesday

Our Nurses' Day materials are sponsored by LV=.

Get CMS ready

All RCN stewards should have received their new RCN email account (@rcn.reps.org.uk) by the end of April.

If you haven't already done so, you'll need to set up your account now so you're ready when we roll out training for our new case management system (CMS), which is coming later this year.

If you need support, our IT team can help. Details can be found in the email you've received to tell you your new account is ready.

To find out about the benefits our new CMS will bring and watch a short video demo, visit tinyurl.com/rcn-cms

Candidates for RCN President election announced

The following candidates have been confirmed as standing for election to become RCN President:

- Dr Denise Chaffer
- Professor Rod Thomson FRCN
- Maria Trewern

Voting via a postal ballot opens on 13 May and closes on 14 June. The successful candidate will be announced on 15 June and take up their post on 1 July with their term of office ending on 31 December 2022.

RCN Chair of Council Dave Dawes said: "RCN Presidents are ambassadors not just for the RCN but for the whole nursing profession both in the UK and around the world. As we continue to push for



safe staffing and improved pay while supporting members throughout the pandemic, this role is more important than ever.

"I would urge you to vote for who you think will best fulfil this role when the ballot opens in May."

To find out more information about each candidate and our online hustings event on 13 May, visit rcn.org.uk/current-elections

New podcast unpacks professional issues

Have you listened to the RCN Professional Nursing Committee's new podcast yet? Nursing Matters unpacks nursing news, explores professional issues, and introduces members who are at the forefront of developing nursing practice and the profession. Listen at rcn.org.uk/nursingmatters



NHS pay in Scotland: have your say

The Scottish government has made a one-year pay offer to NHS Scotland Agenda for Change staff following negotiations with the RCN and other health trade unions, and NHS employers. Members on NHS Scotland Agenda for Change terms and conditions are being asked to vote to accept or reject the offer in a consultation running from 16 April to 5 May. The RCN is recommending that members reject the offer.

RCN Scotland Board Chair Julie Lamberth said: "Governments across the UK need to demonstrate that nursing staff are valued. That's why we are campaigning for 12.5%. It's important that all members working in the NHS have their say on this offer. We believe the nursing profession deserves fair pay that recognises our contribution, supports retention and recruitment to ensure patient



safety and compensates for the failure of salaries to keep up with the cost of living over the last 10 years. We are recommending our members reject this offer."

As *Activate* went to press, the RCN was preparing to open the consultation. Visit rcn.org.uk/fairpay-scotland

Vote now in this year's AGM

Members will vote on whether the RCN should rejoin the International Council of Nurses at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 14 May

In 2013, RCN members voted to discontinue the RCN's membership of the International Council of Nurses. This resolution, which requires a simple majority to pass, will be discussed at the meeting, which will take place online for the second year running.

Members will also be asked to agree how to reinstate the cycle of half of RCN Council being elected every two years at the Council elections due to be held in 2023, and to make a minor change to terminology in the Standing Orders relating to unfit conduct.

If you can't attend the AGM, you can vote in advance. Members will have received an email with details from rcnagm@cesvotes.com

The AGM is also an opportunity to ask questions about the performance and running of the RCN and raise matters of a professional interest.

The AGM will be held online from 11am on Friday 14 May. Members will be sent an email from rcnagm@cesvotes.com with a link to join on 13 May. Questions can be emailed before the meeting to governance.support@rcn.org.uk or asked at the meeting itself.

Find out more at rcn.org.uk/agm21

6 VITAL SUPPORT

Talking about trauma

RCN learning rep Fraser Smith is helping members working in care homes manage experiences of trauma throughout the pandemic

A year on since UK care homes first locked down due to COVID-19, Caring Homes regulatory compliance training manager and RCN learning rep Fraser decided to do something to offer extra support to members who were feeling the emotional impact of working during the pandemic.

“It’s been very difficult,” says Fraser, who is the training lead for all 70 Caring Homes locations across the UK. “Many colleagues were off sick when we first went into lockdown. We had to try and put in support for them, so it has had an impact on everyone and many staff members have struggled at some point over the past year.”

Like family

Fraser says that for care home staff, those they care for become like family members and many residents have lived in the homes for several years.

“During lockdown, some of the homes had a number of deaths,” says Fraser. “And in many places, staff had



to cover for colleagues who were shielding.”

Many employees were also isolating from their own families during the height of the pandemic, often working longer hours covering for colleagues or just not wanting to leave a resident who was unwell.

Fraser says: “Speaking to various care home managers about the impact on staff, I wanted to look at how we could offer support

in managing symptoms of trauma on top of the resources already available through my employer.”

Raising awareness

In his role as an RCN learning rep, Fraser has regular catch-ups with RCN national officer Irene Murray who put him in touch with the RCN Counselling Service.

Fraser worked with his own organisation and the RCN to arrange a short online

webinar around the theme of trauma, including looking at reactions to trauma and the difference between experiencing symptoms of trauma and a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“We wanted to raise awareness of the different things staff might be experiencing and the support available,” says Fraser.

He organised posters to be sent to all the homes, advertised the hour-long session on staff noticeboards and the presentation was shared with all employees, not just RCN members.

“Many colleagues told me the session was helpful,” adds Fraser. “It was great working with the RCN Counselling Service. Now I feel that we have that connection to do more collaborative work in the future.”

Getting support

RCN counselling clinical and operational lead Tanja Koch says: “It’s not a sign of weakness to struggle with traumatic experiences – it’s a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.

“We’ve recently expanded the RCN’s counselling offer to include trauma-focused therapy, funded by the COVID-19 Healthcare Support Appeal until January 2022. RCN reps can play an important role in signposting members to these services.”

Tanja adds: “It’s important to remember that most people don’t

develop PTSD after a traumatic event. PTSD is a diagnostic term used if trauma symptoms haven’t subsided over time and cause considerable distress and issues in someone’s life. Only a qualified professional can diagnose this.

“If after a month someone’s trauma symptoms haven’t decreased or have become worse, they should seek support from their GP.”

Find out more about the RCN Counselling Service at rcn.org.uk/counselling

“

We wanted to raise awareness about the things staff might be experiencing

Words by Susan Embley. Picture by Greg Macvean

What is trauma?

People can experience psychological trauma following an event that is unexpected, outside their usual range of human experience, or involves some form of loss, injury or threat of injury/death (whether actual or perceived).

Experiencing trauma can sometimes result in emotional, physical and behavioural symptoms, such as feeling overwhelmed or experiencing increased anxiety and stress.

Advice for coping

- Acknowledge what you have been through.
- Speak to someone you trust, such as a family member, friend or your line manager and if you need to, seek support from your GP or the RCN Counselling Service.
- Be gentle and kind to yourself.
- Increase your level of self-care – start with the basics like nutrition, sleep, rest, exercise.
- Try to keep to a routine.
- Do things you enjoy, such as listening to music or cooking.
- Try to limit your exposure to things and people that cause you more stress and anxiety.

8 OPINION

‘We’re not invincible’

Reflecting on some of the challenges RCN reps are facing during the pandemic, Vicky Brotherton says it’s important for reps to work together and be mindful of their own wellbeing

Not being able to hold face-to-face meetings with members has been tough for reps. When you’re in the room, it’s easier to judge someone’s body language and give that extra support that members sometimes need.

I think reps are struggling more with their workloads now too and I’m concerned that could continue as members who’ve been shielding start to come back into the workplace. This is one of the reasons why it’s so important for reps to work together.

As the lead steward in my trust, I ensure all our reps get together regularly to talk about how many cases we have and current issues. We work out if someone has too much work or could do with support, and we make sure our local RCN officer is informed too.

Don’t be afraid

If you don’t have a team of reps, it’s important to talk to your local RCN officer about your caseload or work. Don’t be afraid to talk about how

you’re feeling and to raise any concerns. They’re there to support reps in the way we would support any member.

We also need to remember that the support available through the RCN and employers is there to support us too. Don’t put a shield around yourself and say: “I’m a rep, I can cope”. It’s OK not to be OK or to need some support. As reps, we’re not invincible and we have feelings and needs that we must consider too.

Time to talk

Our region has been holding regular Time to Talk events so members can share their experiences in a safe space. We’ve been holding similar events at a branch level and I pulled together a quick presentation for members and reps with information about RCN services and other sources of support. It’s useful to remind ourselves of what’s available.

The RCN website also has lots of resources to support wellbeing, such as mindfulness videos and



advice on self-care. I’ve found a regular, more social catch-up with fellow reps from across my region to be a good de-stressor. We meet online during an evening or weekend to have a chat and hear what’s going on across the region.

🕒 *Vicky is lead steward at her trust, a safety rep and RCN Plymouth branch chair*

Supporting you

For information about RCN Member Support Services and resources to help you look after your wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit rcn.org.uk/covid-wellbeing



COVID-19: risk assessments

All employers should follow their duties under health and safety legislation and carry out individual risk assessments where required

When should an individual risk assessment be carried out?

Outside of the shielding group, which includes people who are extremely clinically vulnerable, other factors that can increase the risk of contracting or developing more severe complications from exposure to COVID-19 include:

- if you're aged 60 or above
- if you're from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background
- if you have a lung condition, heart disease, type 1 or type 2 diabetes, chronic kidney disease, liver disease, a condition affecting the brain or nerves or a condition that means you have a high risk of getting infections
- if you take medicine that can affect the immune system
- if you have a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above.

Members with one or more of the characteristics listed here may be more at risk and should ask for an individual risk assessment. Employers are also legally required to

assess the risk of harm to new and expectant mothers. This includes exposure to COVID-19, but also other risks such as chemical exposure, radiation and violence.

What should members do if they need a risk assessment but haven't had one?

We've produced a set of letter templates to help members request an individual risk assessment. If members feel anxious about their risk but don't have one of the increased risk factors listed here, they can still use a letter template to request a risk assessment.

Should members working at home have a risk assessment?

Yes. If an individual or pregnancy risk assessment has indicated that a member should be working from home, or if a member is shielding and able to work from home, their employer has a duty to carry out a risk assessment of home working.

This should include addressing any risks from working on a computer for

long periods. We've also produced a letter template for members to request a home working risk assessment.

What should members do if they're concerned about the results of a risk assessment?

Members should escalate their concerns to their occupational health service, their local RCN rep or contact the RCN advice team on **0345 772 6100**. They should also do this if a risk assessment hasn't been completed after it's been requested. If a member is pregnant, their midwife or GP may also be able to offer support.

More information

Find our letter templates and full advice guide at rcn.org.uk/covid-risk-assessments

Here you can also listen to a short podcast on the subject with RCN safety rep Mitzi Wilson and RCN National Officer Kim Sunley.

10 EQUALITY AT WORK

‘The pandemic has united us’

RCN stewards Bev and Olga are co-chairs of their Birmingham trust’s BAME staff network. They explain how they’re making sure recent conversations about racism and equality lead to positive change



Bev and Olga

With research showing people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are at higher risk from COVID-19, BAME staff networks have offered crucial support to nursing staff during the pandemic.

Matron Bev Baker and endoscopic nurse Olga Leach-Walters are co-chairs of their trust’s BAME staff network, where they support approximately 8,000 colleagues from BAME backgrounds.

A place to be heard

“My role as an RCN steward correlates with the work that I’m doing with the network and on

equality, equity and diversity,” says Bev. “It doesn’t matter what someone’s background is, or whatever kind of protected characteristic they have, we need to be kind and fair to staff.”

Olga, who is also vice chair of the region’s NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) group, says: “I’m very passionate about the RCN, because that’s where I found my voice. Similarly, the network offers our staff a place to be heard and a place of safety. Educating, listening and challenging issues as a group is less daunting than doing it as an individual. This is not a one-man band, and no-one is alone.”

“

It’s really important to create a positive environment for staff to work in

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MORE
ONLINE
rcn.org.uk/
activate

Words by
Becky Gilroy.
Picture by
Steve Baker

Making progress

The network organises monthly meetings which are now virtual, allowing more people to attend to voice their concerns on issues such as speaking up, career progression and staff wellbeing.

“The pandemic has united us,” says Bev. “Once upon a time, there would be five or six people coming to sit in the meeting room. But during COVID-19, we held two wellbeing webinars which over 500 people attended over the two sessions.”

Bev and Olga also have bi-monthly meetings with the trust’s chief executive officer and have helped set up a fairness taskforce and reciprocal mentoring, where individuals in protected characteristic groups work alongside senior leaders.

Time to speak up

The events of last summer, when thousands of protestors took to the streets following the death of George Floyd, a black man killed by police officers in the US, sparked a wider discussion among network members. “People felt that this was the time to come and talk about their experiences,” says Olga.

Bev and Olga encouraged and facilitated conversations

with senior management about race, equality and the most pressing issues for BAME staff.

“Before, people didn’t want to rock the boat,” Bev says. “The Black Lives Matter protests were a huge wakeup call for black people. We know racism is happening. It’s staring you right in the face, but it’s taboo to speak about it. We’ve broken that taboo now.”

Vaccine hesitancy

Recent surveys are now showing there is a high rate of vaccine hesitancy in BAME communities, and Bev and Olga feel that they are well-placed in their network and RCN roles to tackle misinformation.

They both took part in promotional videos for their trust, and Bev shared her experience of contracting COVID-19 and encouraged people to get vaccinated. “We’re doing a lot of work in the community and trying to promote vaccination, as well as eradicate some of the myths that are out there,” adds Bev.

When Olga had her vaccine, she made sure to communicate her experience with her community by giving interviews to the media. “I felt that when all the mistrust was being spoken about, we needed

black leaders to come forward,” she says.

Olga adds that education and building back trust in public institutions is key, as well as leading by example.

Looking to the future

While there is more work to be done to eradicate inequality, both Olga and Bev feel proud of their achievements. Bev says: “It’s really important for me, as a manager, to be a role model and create a positive environment for staff to work in.”

Reflecting on her various roles in which she supports colleagues, Olga says: “Without the RCN, I could never have achieved this much with the BAME network, because their aims overlap. My role in the trust helps me with my RCN steward role in turn.”

More information

Our advice guide on vaccination has links to some useful resources that promote and encourage COVID-19 vaccination, including University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust’s videos featuring Bev and Olga. Visit rcn.org.uk/vaccination-faqs

PULL OUT
AND DISPLAY
THIS POSTER IN
YOUR WORKPLACE

Signs of work-relat



**Make
one
change...**



- Do you know the signs of dermatitis of the hands? Look out for dryness, itching and redness which can lead to cracking, blistering, flaky and scaly skin.
- At the end of each work period, protect your hands by regularly applying hand moisturising creams (containing emollients) after handwashing. Always wet hands ahead of applying soap, as this is a common problem with drying of nurses' skin. Ensure that you rinse and dry thoroughly. Follow established procedures for hand washing.
- 93% of nursing staff who responded to our 2019 skin health survey said that they had experienced some kind of skin condition, including cracking, scaling and pain in the last 12 months.

Glove Awareness Week 3-7 May 2021

Work-related dermatitis



Royal College
of Nursing



- Under health and safety law, your employer should have a programme of skin checks in place for nursing staff exposed to the risk of work-related dermatitis.
- Report any problems to your manager or occupational health provider as soon as they arise.

Who to speak to about work-related skin problems:

14 MAKING A DIFFERENCE

‘Be unignorable’

RCN steward and Wales representative on the RCN Nursing Support Workers Committee Alison James-Herbert is making sure members have access to appropriate PPE now and in the future



Alison

The fact that I happen to be a nursing support worker doesn't make any difference to how good I am as a steward. You just need to be willing to speak up for members and I'm determined to be "unignorable".

In March 2020, when the pandemic first hit, people just didn't know what to do and how to react. It seems like such a long time ago now. In my workplace, which is a community hospital, we were initially given masks but were told that one had to last the

whole day. We had just one box of single-use masks for the whole ward and we didn't know when more would be available.

Ward managers were doing everything they could to protect their staff, but no-one was listening. I knew this wasn't good enough.

This all took place while we were nursing confused patients who were terrified that they were going to die. My patients are living with dementia and at this point

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I'm not
frightened
to speak out

READ
MORE
ONLINE
[rcn.org.uk/
activate](https://rcn.org.uk/activate)

🕒 Along with safety rep Wendy Barwick and learning rep Lucy Flatman, Alison was presented with a commendation from the High Sheriff of Newport, recognising her essential work during the pandemic. Read our PPE advice guide at rcn.org.uk/covid-19-ppe

Picture of Alison by Stuart Fisher

visitors were still allowed so they were being told what was going on outside.

A time for action

The pressure was immense, and I admit I was scared too. But this was a time for action. I wrote to the lead nurse for our division and told her that without proper protection, we were being treated “like lambs to the slaughter”.

My letter was polite, but my message was one that could not be ignored. I’m not frightened to speak out.

The starkness of my message ensured that action was taken and, not before time, staff were given appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). I’m now looking at what uniforms we will need to wear while in PPE in the summer.

We can’t leave this too late. There are policies in place, but the cooler uniforms don’t currently exist. There’s very little ventilation in my workplace and working in standard uniforms with PPE will be unbearable as temperatures rise. I’m working closely with our local safety rep to insist we take practical steps to ensure we have the cooler uniforms we need.

RCN steward Maive Coley has represented members at all levels and wants to see more nursing support workers becoming reps

As a member of the RCN Nursing Support Workers Committee (East Midlands), I bring workplace issues facing nursing support workers to the attention of the committee, including how we are perceived by others. Things are getting better, but there’s still much to do and change, like when someone says: “You’re only a HCA, what do you know?” We are trained and skilled in our areas and we are not “only”. We are crucial to supporting health and social care.

In my role as a steward, I recently represented a band 8 ward manager who felt she was working at a level above her grade. I set up a meeting with her and her manager, liaised with HR and thankfully the issue was resolved by meaningful conversation with the member’s manager – with a missing appraisal document being cited as the reason that her work had not been recognised.

Please encourage nursing support workers in your workplace to consider becoming reps. Some members don’t even realise



that all RCN reps have the same learning and development, whatever their role, so it’s important for us to spread the message that reps who happen to be nursing support workers can support nursing staff at all grades.

I tell other nursing support workers to give it a go – to have confidence in themselves and remember the brilliant training they’ll get at the RCN. It’s important to look at what people can do, not what they can’t.

➔ *Members can sign up to become a rep at rcn.org.uk/become-a-rep*



A victory for workers' rights

RCN Head of Legal (Employment) Joanne Galbraith-Marten says a landmark Supreme Court decision will make it easier to establish individuals as “workers” and therefore entitled to basic employment rights

In the long-running matter of Uber BV and others vs Aslam and others, the claimants were Uber drivers and brought Employment Tribunal claims in respect of Uber’s failure to pay the national minimum wage and for annual leave.

In order to pursue those claims, the drivers had to first establish they were workers for the purposes of the Employment Rights Act 1996, the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 and the Working Time Regulations 1998. The definition of a worker in this legislation is an individual who works under any contract, whereby they undertake to personally perform work or services for the other party to the contract.

Uber argued that any contract for services was between the driver and passengers, with Uber merely acting as the drivers’ agent. Uber relied on the terms of agreement between itself and drivers, but also the agreement accepted by passengers which expressly states that Uber is only acting as an agent.

However, the drivers asserted that in reality they worked for Uber and were subject to a significant degree of control and performance management procedures like those which would apply to workers.

They had little, if any, opportunity to develop a business as they couldn’t contact passengers directly and, at the time of the original hearing, they weren’t even told the trip destination until they had accepted the “trip request”. They also had to provide services themselves and couldn’t use a “substitute”.

The decision

In 2016, the Employment Tribunal found that the drivers were workers for the purposes of the relevant legislation and therefore entitled to proceed with their claims.

Uber appealed but in a groundbreaking decision in February 2021, the Supreme Court held unanimously that whether an individual is a worker is not determined by

reference to the terms of any contract or agreement they have entered into, but instead by asking whether it was Parliament’s intention that they should fall within the scope of statutory employment protection.

The court recognised that the purpose of employment legislation is to protect vulnerable workers and it would undermine that purpose if employers were able to draft contracts that had the effect of preventing individuals from enforcing their rights.

The decision is very welcome and will make it much easier to establish that individuals are entitled to basic employment rights in future.



Joanne Galbraith-Marten

Fair Pay For Nursing

We're asking members to do three simple things as part of our campaign

STAY ACTIVE 	STAY IN TOUCH 	STAY ENGAGED 
Download campaign posters and use our materials to talk about the importance of Fair Pay For Nursing in your workplace. Visit rcn.org.uk/fairpay	Make sure your contact details are up to date, especially your employer and workplace, so we can contact you. Visit rcn.org.uk/MyRCN	Sign up to become an e-campaigner – you'll receive updates and easy online actions you can take to support the campaign. Visit rcn.org.uk/become-an-e-campaigner

What's happening with NHS pay?

The NHS Pay Review Body (PRB) has been asked to make recommendations on what pay rise NHS staff working in England, Northern Ireland and Wales should receive for 2021-22.

In Scotland, the government isn't using the PRB process and, as *Activate* went to press, the RCN was preparing to consult members who work in the NHS in Scotland on a one-year pay offer from the Scottish government. The RCN is recommending members reject the offer (see page 5).

In March, the Department of Health and Social Care submitted written evidence to the NHS PRB in which it said it had assumed a headline pay award of 1% for NHS staff in England. The money made available by Westminster for the NHS in England has direct spending implications for other nations.

We condemned the 1% proposal for England and rapidly set up a £35 million strike fund to support workers if industrial action is

ultimately taken. Since then, we've further criticised the Prime Minister for being dangerously out of touch with nursing staff and the public who firmly support our campaign. We're also starting to develop our own "organising model" and we've introduced training to strengthen members' ability to drive change (see page 18).

Our Fair Pay For Nursing campaign is calling for a fully funded 12.5% pay increase for all nursing staff covered by Agenda for Change terms. We've submitted written and oral evidence to the NHS PRB explaining why nursing staff deserve this rise, its affordability, and stressing the link between fair pay, recruitment, retention, and safe staffing.

Ministers have indicated they expect the PRB to make its recommendations on NHS pay in England, Northern Ireland and Wales in May 2021. Although the PRB makes recommendations, it is ministers in each country who will decide what level of pay rise to award.

18 THE VOICE OF MEMBERS

‘Don’t get angry – get organised’

We’re starting to build a new approach to engage, educate and empower members to be a force for change in their workplaces and communities



Our collective power is greater than the sum of our parts. With that power, we can influence locally and nationally to fight for what nursing and our patients need.

Professional standards, pay, staffing levels, employment rights, workplace safety or any other issue we face – together, we can make real impact.

What’s happening?

We are changing the way we support members in their workplace. We are beginning to create a new organising model

that is 100% unique to the character of our membership.

Organising is an approach to making positive change happen, where you identify the issues, come together and bring about solutions on your own terms. Successful organising is achieved largely by supporting you to build strong networks and invest in your leadership capability.

Is this just for existing activists?

This is for every single RCN member. When RCN members come together, we

can achieve real change – in our workplace, community and society.

The principle of organising is members working together to develop mutual support and build leadership skills so they can work together across issues, workplaces, employers and in communities.

Every member has a role to play in educating their fellow nursing staff and all members take responsibility as active members.

For example, some members may want to become more

GET INVOLVED

Training with world-renowned trade union educators will give you the resources, confidence and ability to take action

Sign up for expert training from a global leader in workplace organising this summer. We're inviting members to attend a six-week programme with world-renowned trade union educators to help them develop the resources, confidence and ability to take action.

Be part of this exciting journey. Sign up to attend the first programme by 3 May and look out for more courses running later in the summer.

If you can't sign up now, you can register for more information.

Visit rcn.org.uk/organising

active in our professional work, but don't necessarily see themselves taking on traditional representative roles. These members could be engaged, excited and supported by an approach focused on advocacy, collective action and bringing about change for the benefit and improvement of patient care.

Is this a new idea?

Many different kinds of organisations and groups do different kinds of organising work, and for different reasons. Other health unions, professional bodies and community groups are increasingly exploring this way of working to more intensively equip their members to make change happen, but it's the first time our elected members have formally decided to begin, design and eventually

implement a unique organising model that will serve both the professional and trade union elements of our membership.

Some members are self-organised already. Some parts of the RCN, including certain regions, have been testing elements of organising over the years. Members in Northern Ireland showed incredible capacity and passion for organising

through the industrial action they took in December 2019 and January 2020.

How is this different to what we're doing now?

The RCN will continue to provide the support and services that members expect. The goal now is to give you more. More resources, more skills and more opportunities to act on what matters to you.



20 CAMPAIGNING

Protect the future of nursing

RCN Scotland Board Chair Julie Lamberth shares how members are influencing politicians to ensure the next Scottish government values nursing staff and safeguards the future of the profession



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THE FUTURE OF
NURSING**

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“The events of this last year have made it clear that things need to change,” says Julie Lamberth, senior charge nurse and RCN Scotland Board chair.

“Members have told us they’re working harder than ever but feel less valued and problems that pre-existed the pandemic, like low staffing levels, continue to have a huge impact on patient safety, and staff morale and wellbeing.”

As Scotland prepares to elect its next government in May, Julie and members across the country have been calling on politicians

to commit to key actions to tackle these issues.

Julie says: “It’s an opportunity to engage with politicians and we need to do that now more than ever. COVID-19 has shone a light on our profession and there’s been a lot of references to nursing staff as ‘heroes’. I don’t see myself as a hero – I’m just doing my job. But I want to be valued for the job I do.”

The RCN’s Protect the Future of Nursing manifesto sets out exactly what members and the RCN think needs to be done to better value the profession and to ensure nursing staff can deliver safe

and effective care to patients in all health and care settings across Scotland now and in the future.

Prioritising safe staffing

Julie says that alongside fair pay, one of the most crucial elements is implementing Scotland’s Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act. Members were instrumental in shaping this safe staffing legislation, which is the first of its kind in the UK to apply to both health and social care services and was passed in May 2019. Work to implement the act has since been paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“One of our key asks is that work to implement the legislation in workplaces starts again,” says Julie. “The RCN will be involved in this work, which includes developing statutory guidance and workforce planning tools.

“Even before the pandemic, almost half of members in Scotland were reporting that they were too busy to provide the level of care they'd like to. We've been holding roundtable events with MSPs as part of our campaigning and members are questioning them on when the legislation will come into force – they can see the impact it will have.”

In her clinical role as a senior charge nurse (SCN), Julie is also optimistic about the difference the legislation, alongside investment in the workforce – another of the manifesto's asks – could make.

“With the right staffing levels, I'd be able to focus more on developing and supporting my staff,” explains Julie. “It's definitely got harder to do that over the last year. I need time to develop staff and think about the next step in their careers. With recent surveys showing an increase in members wanting to leave the profession, this is so important.”

Speaking up for nursing

Julie says that although individual MSPs haven't been able to commit to the RCN's ask of implementing the legislation

by the end of the year, most have shown a lot of support during online events hosted by the RCN. “Members are asking valuable questions and sharing their experiences,” says Julie.

As well as attending these events and spreading the word on social media, Julie wants to encourage members to get involved in their local RCN branch. With members who are working in the NHS in Scotland currently being consulted on a pay offer (see page 5), Julie says it's also a good opportunity to find out more about what's happening.

“The RCN has thousands of members and we should be using our voice,” says Julie. “As nursing staff, we advocate and speak up for our patients. It's time to all use our voice to speak up for nursing and the future of the profession.”

“

I don't see myself as a hero. But I want to be valued for the job I do



Our manifesto calls for the next Scottish government to ensure:

- fair pay for nursing
- support for professional development and wellbeing
- enough nursing staff to deliver safe and effective care
- a workforce in the community and care homes that reflects clinical need
- action to tackle health inequalities and grow the mental health nursing workforce.

With the Scottish parliament election taking place on 6 May, there's still time to show your support for the campaign on social media using the hashtag **#ProtectTheFutureOfNursing**.

Find out more and get involved at rcn.org.uk/protect



Library in your living room

The RCN Library and Archive Service has lots of tools to help members gain confidence in using our e-library and easily find what they need



“We know how busy members are so we want to make sure they can easily find the information they need online,” says Alan Chalkley, RCN Information Literacy Assistant. “This has become even more essential during the pandemic with our library buildings across the UK closed.

“We have an extensive online offer and we want to make it as easy as possible for members to find out what’s available and how to access it.”

With this in mind, the library and archive service offers a range of quick video tutorials. These step-by-step guides

show members how to access articles and ebooks, and how to search online databases like CINAHL, the British Nursing Index, and the RCN’s subject guides.

Subject guides

The library’s subject guides are a good starting point for finding out more about different areas in nursing and locating key resources, says Alan. “You’ll find resources from the RCN and other reputable organisations, as well as ebooks, and we offer ready-made journal searches on relevant topics to get you started,” he explains.

Alan says the team works closely with RCN forum steering committees, forum members and the RCN’s professional leads to create the guides and they’re updated regularly to reflect best practice. There’s also a subject guide for RCN reps, pulling together a range of guidance and resources to support learning reps, safety reps and stewards in their roles.

Useful tools

As well as subject guides, the library and archive service offers a number of online tools to help you find reliable resources quickly. Through the online platform BrowZine, you can easily browse nursing journals and magazines, from older issues to the present day.

A new tool called LibKey Nomad is also helping members save time. Alan says: “When you’re searching for information on other websites, like PubMed or Research Gate, LibKey Nomad shows you which articles are available through the library and you can then access them in one click.” Find out more about

these tools at tinyurl.com/rcnlib-tools

Online events

The library and archive service hosts a range of regular events for members, from nursing history talks, to events tackling current issues or helping members improve their study skills.

As a result of COVID-19, these events have all moved online and the service has also introduced a series of creative workshops titled “Time to...”, giving members the opportunity to take part in activities such as writing poetry, drawing or guided meditation.

“We wanted to do something to help members step back from the challenging situation they’re working

in,” says Alan. Another new series is documenting members’ experiences during the pandemic. These events, and more, are available to watch again and members can also explore the RCN’s wide range of nursing exhibitions online.

A helping hand

Alan says that although there are many tools to help members use our e-library independently, the team is still on-hand to help. “Members can get in touch using our webchat function or give us a call,” says Alan. “We also offer one-to-one online training sessions, which can be tailored to members’ needs and booked through our website and weekly drop-in sessions.”

Visit rcn.org.uk/library



Jennifer Foreman, an oncology nurse practitioner from Northern Ireland, says the RCN’s literature search service is an invaluable resource

I’ve made good use of the library’s literature search service – it’s supported me in my clinical role and all the further training I’ve undertaken. When you’re writing something, you have to factor in a lot of time for research. This is where the service can save you valuable time.

My advice is to make sure you have a really good idea about what you want before you submit your request and if you need help with this, contact the library team.

One of the main benefits of using the RCN’s library is the huge range of nursing-specific materials available.

This shows in the literature search results, and having that one-to-one service from library staff with specialist nursing knowledge makes such a difference.

Picture of Jennifer by David Gee

Do you know about our literature search service?

Our literature search service can save you time and support you in your RCN work or nursing career. Once you’ve submitted a request, our expert literature searchers will use a wide range of databases to find journal articles and publications relevant to your topic and send you the details by email.

Requests can be made by completing the form on our website, or by phone, email or webchat. This service isn’t available for student members, but we do have a range of resources available to help students and other members in carrying out their own searches. This includes video tutorials, training sessions and our new interactive tool that helps you get the most out of your searches in 10 straightforward steps. Visit rcn.org.uk/lit-search



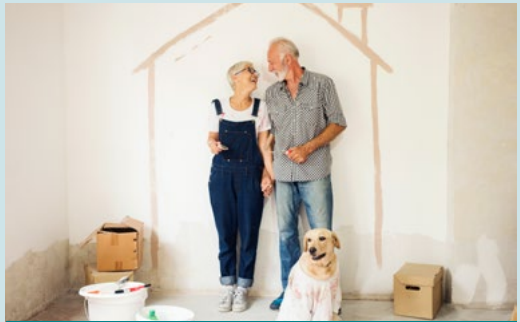
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