

Council

Date of meeting:	23 April 2015
Title of Paper:	Communications report
Appendices:	Appendix A: Digital activity
Presented by:	Fiona Johnson, Director of Communications
Is a decision required? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This paper updates Council on significant communications activity and new developments since November 2014.
- 1.2. Not confidential.

2. Detail

2.1 Communications support for Congress 2015

Preparations for Congress are well under way. We have used Bulletin, Activate, the web site, email and social media to promote Congress, encourage members to attend and to urge branches and forums to submit topics, and now emergency items, for debate. An app is being developed to allow instant and interactive access to the agenda and programme of events.

2.2 Member magazines and newsletters

RCN Bulletin continues to cover the full range of RCN priorities and services. RCN Scotland's campaign on health inequalities, *Nursing at the Edge*, provided a striking cover feature in December. The New Year kicked off with a feature interview with Cecilia Anim as she took up her role as President. Clinical articles have included a report on a campaign by a Wales member to

Agenda Item 3

secure wider provision of defibrillators in public places and the word of a forensic nurse examiner working with victims of rape and sexual assault. In February we launched our election manifesto and covered the benefits to members of taking part in the international research conference. Pay, the election campaign and Congress feature in every edition. The April edition reports on the successful hustings event held on 23 March and the new NMC Code. Coverage in Activate is geared towards the essential information our accredited representatives need in the workplace and has included coverage of recent legal wins, employment law issues and new rights for adoptive parents. The latest Health and Care magazine features BME pioneer and HPC member Maive Coley, the new care certificate for HCAs in England, the Shape of Faring review, FGM, and ground breaking work by an HCA in north Wales on the patient experience.

Further successful training sessions have been held for forum members interested in blogging as an alternative or an adjunct to their newsletters.

2.3 **Corporate communications, publishing and centenary**

Congress and the AGM will be the major focus for the team over the next couple of months. The Congress guide, Council's report to members, the annual report and accounts, and a suite of new and updated publications are all being prepared for launch in Bournemouth. A special stand showcasing emerging plans for the centenary is planned and will include a first tranche of centenary memorabilia. The RCN worked in partnership with NHS supply chain to produce a publication and web materials on how nurses can influence effective procurement decisions. The publication *Small changes, big differences*, was launched on 24 March and very well received.

2.4 **External affairs**

The external affairs department comprises three teams, media, parliamentary affairs and campaigns/digital engagement, led by Jane Hughes.

2.4.1 **Media profile**

The RCN continues to command strong coverage in print and broadcast media. We have a very strong strike rate in securing coverage for our responses to breaking health stories, to the point where it is noteworthy if the RCN is not quoted on a significant issue. This is true across the four countries of the UK at national and regional level. We have been much in demand to comment on staffing levels, pressures in A and E, the recruitment of overseas nurses and need for sustained investment in our health services. In our proactive work, notable successes have been the Frontline First report on mental health (November 2014), and February's report on agency spend. As this paper was being completed, we were preparing to launch our final Frontline First report before the election. *The fragile frontline* is an analysis undertaken by policy colleagues of the coalition government's track record on

Agenda Item 3

nurse staffing levels. The results of a survey on members' access to CPD will be launched in the week commencing 20 April.

2.4.2 Nursing Counts

The Nursing Counts campaign has attracted strong interest and engagement since its launch on 4 February. The HQ hustings event was very successful with a positive commitment from the panellists to our manifesto priorities and a real sense of energy and engagement from members attending. The event has been written up by Nursing Standard, Nursing Times, Bulletin and Activate. Country and regional hustings events are planned in Scotland and the South West and have already taken place in Wales.

Nearly 10,000 users have visited the *Nursing Counts* website, of whom nearly 5,000 have used the "Contact your candidates" functionality. Fortnightly Twitter chats have gone extremely well and have been retweeted by more than 300 users including prominent commentators like Roy Lilley. The hustings event generated a great deal of interest on the night, and was trending on Twitter during the event itself. A further twitter chat involving student committee members is planned for 13 April. Our postings on Facebook have generated more than 7,000 likes, comments and shares and the Instagram wall has 190 photos so far.

2.4.3 Campaigns and digital engagement

The teams have focused on the *Nursing Counts* election campaign, the pay and What If campaigns, preparations for Congress and Nurses' Day. The digital team is heavily involved in the web site development project. A Twitter thread on the RCN's 99th birthday to encourage interest in the centenary was very successful with heartfelt testimonials from members who had needed and received RCN support over the years. A summary of digital activity is attached as Appendix A to this paper.

2.5 Communications staffing

2014 saw significant turnover within the communications directorate for a variety of reasons including career progression and maternity leave. This placed significant pressure on the external affairs team at a particularly busy time. A number of temporary staff filled gaps in the campaigns team while permanent recruitments were undertaken. The directorate is almost at full strength now with recruitment to the post of parliamentary affairs manager planned for immediately after the general election.

2.6 Council communications

The Chair of Council established a working group to look at a number of issues concerning the effectiveness of our communications with members and with Council itself. Two members of that group, Anne Wells and Anne

Agenda Item 3

Kennedy have considered Council participation in the Discussion Zone. This is the subject of a separate paper to Council along with recommendations for wider social media activity and will inform Council's development session on member engagement. (See *paper 3.2 on the confidential agenda*).

3. Resources, costs and implications

Not applicable.

4. Impact and/or risk assessments

Not applicable.

5. RCN policies, procedures, Key Performance Indicators and strategic plan

All communications work is intended to support the RCN's strategic plan and Council priorities.

6. Recommendations

Council is asked to note this information.

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