

Report to members of the meeting of RCN Council held on Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 April 2015 at RCN HQ, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN

Member engagement

1. We began our two day meeting with an important discussion about member engagement in the RCN.
2. To inform our discussion we received a presentation on the development of the new RCN website. We noted that the new site will be optimised for mobiles and tablets and that content will be much clearer, easier to access, and tailored to the individual user. It will also have the facility for users to comment on individual pages and will integrate with social media.
3. The site will be available for members attending RCN Congress to browse and comment on ahead of it being launched in August.
4. We also heard how the new customer relationship management system will enable branch officers, forum chairs and network leads to communicate with their members using a range of different communication tools.
5. In addition we discussed the RCN's social media strategy and reflected on the opportunities that social media offers to enhance engagement with members.

2014 annual report and accounts

6. A key part of our meeting was the approval of the annual report and financial statements for 2014 which we were satisfied had been prepared in accordance with relevant accounting and trade union requirements. The Audit Committee had previously reviewed the report and financial statements in detail and the external auditors confirmed that they had provided an unmodified true and fair opinion on the accounts.

7. The annual report shows that the RCN worked harder than ever to support members. In 2014 we supported more than 24,625 new representation cases in 7,110 workplaces. The legal team secured almost £7.5m in employment tribunal and personal injury compensation. We offered counselling or career support to over 2,000 members, and helped members manage more than £8m of debt by negotiating more than £89,000 of it to be written-off.
8. During the year we focussed energy on driving up the quality of patient care by promoting our standards for improving patient care and the advancement of clinical practice, scoping out our future education offer, and reviewing our international strategy.
9. We noted that it was difficult to make comparisons with the previous year because of the transition to a new financial year based on the calendar year. The 2014 financial statements report on the 12-month period January to December 2014, but the prior-year the report was for the 9-month period April to December 2013.
10. We noted that the RCN Group's results (which includes the RCN's trading subsidiary, RCN Publishing Company Limited, and the RCN Foundation as well as the main Charter Body) report a surplus, after provision for taxation, of £10.4m.
11. Overall net assets on the Group balance sheet decreased from £49.2m to £45.6m. The reason for the adverse movement is an increase in the pension scheme deficit from the previous position reported at December 2013. However, Council was reassured to see reported that the investment portfolio set up for the RCN in 2014 had grown from £40.0m at its inception to £42.9m by December 2014. In addition, the investments had yielded almost £0.6m in income.
12. We noted that the Group's total income in 2014 was £87.8m and the operating expenditure was £78.7m.
13. A summary of the annual report and accounts will be sent out with the May issue of RCN Bulletin and a full copy will be on the RCN website and be available at the annual general meeting on 24 June in Bournemouth.

Management accounts, performance reporting, risk, and audit.

14. As part of our scrutiny role we reviewed the most recent set of management accounts for the first two months of 2015 and our

performance against the key performance indicators, noting any exceptions.

15. We noted in particular that we are continuing to exceed our membership targets.
16. We also reviewed our corporate risk register and, again, were reassured that appropriate risk controls were in place.
17. A report from the Audit Committee provided us with an update on recent internal audit findings as well as progress on internal and external audit recommendations in the current and previous financial years.

Governance Support Committee

18. We heard a report from the Governance Support Committee which had met in February.
19. The committee had been updated on a number of consultations with members. We heard that the closing date for the consultations on branches, Congress and RCN awards had been extended until the end of May to enable more branches and forums to contribute.
20. The committee had also discussed the election cycle of the President and Deputy president. Following a recommendation from the committee we agreed that the President and Deputy President elections should remain aligned with the calendar year and that from 2016 there will be a new valedictory lecture event which will include the formal hand over of the presidential chain of office.
21. We also agreed a process for enabling accredited representatives to attend UK committee meetings as observers to aid their learning and development and as part of succession planning for the committees.

Council Executive Team (CET)

22. We were updated on two recent meetings of the Council Executive team, one of which had been held jointly with the staff Executive team.
23. The focus of the meetings had been to develop a clear work plan for CET based on priorities identified by the committee chairs. CET's role will be to provide oversight of each of the areas on the plan and to

ensure there are clear accountabilities and performance reporting for each area.

Congress/AGM 2017 and 2018 venue proposals

24. We received a proposal on proposed venues for Congress and the AGM in 2017 and 2018.
25. After looking at the pros and cons of a number of venues throughout the UK we agreed that Congress and the AGM will be held in Liverpool between 11-20 May 2017 and in Belfast between 12 – 21 May 2018.

Council Review

26. We were updated on the latest progress from the Council Review Group. This review of RCN Council is the final stage of our governance review and is focussing on ways of working and how well Council enables the RCN to meet its Royal Charter objectives.
27. We heard that the project is gathering evidence and information in its initial stages. There will then be a full member consultation to inform the development of recommendations in the Autumn.

Communications update

28. We discussed our campaign, [Nursing Counts](#), leading up to the General Election and the focus on getting the political parties to listen to the nursing voice. Our hustings event at RCN HQ had been very well attended with positive commitments from the panellists to our manifesto priorities and a real sense of energy and engagement from the members who attended. We also received updates on events in Scotland and Wales where members had participated confidently.
29. We were also updated on other significant communications activity since the previous report in November. In particular we noticed continued increase in our social media activity and new innovations such as a bespoke RCN App for Congress.

Report from the Nursing Practice and Policy Committee

30. Ian Norris, committee chair, report that they had met on 4 December 2014 and 19 March 2015.

31. In December the committee had received a presentation on the implications for the nursing workforce of the seven day care proposals, and the evidence the RCN had submitted to the NHS Pay Review Body for 2015.
32. They had also received a progress update on the development of the RCN Education Strategy, noted the interim report of the National Advisory Group for Cultural Alignment, and received a number of updates on ongoing work including activity against the Knowledge and Innovation Action Plan 2014-18.
33. In March 2015, the committee had received a presentation on the key findings of the Shape of Caring Review and split into groups to discuss where there were opportunities for RCN members to get involved in the follow up work.
34. The committee had also endorsed an updated RCN position statement on Health Care Support Workers (HCSWs) administering the live attenuated influenza vaccine programme for children and young people.
35. In March, the committee had received feedback from the first meeting of the Clinical Advisory Group and noted the Summary Report of the evaluation of the Pre-Nursing Degree Care Experience Pilot.

Membership and Representation Committee

36. Anne Wells, committee chair, reported that the committee had met on 3 December and on 18 March.
37. At the March meeting the committee had discussed the *Pay for excess hours worked* campaign and had welcomed the unforeseen benefits of the campaign in uncovering poor practice, which had opened up opportunities to discuss safe staffing with employers.
38. The committee had discussed the pay offers across the four countries for 2015/16 and noted that all four governments were looking for a conversation about *Agenda for Change* going forward.
39. The committee had also discussed the increase in cases about paying back overpayments. It had been agreed that a Task and Finish Group should be set up to pull together good practice and formulate a 'good practice' overpayments policy document. This group included representation from the UK Stewards Committee.
40. The committee had also discussed the role of representatives and we discussed the different types of work they do outside of case work. They also agreed the next steps for a project on mentorship and supervision and discussed the importance and value of RCN stewards using the RCN case management system.

International Committee

41. The committee had met on the 19 January 2015 and had discussed the feedback from Fellows and other members who had attended the International Reference Group meeting in November on the RCN's future international priorities.
42. The committee had also received an update on Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) activity since the launch of the RCN position statement in October.
43. In addition, the committee had received a presentation on the World Health Organisation (WHO) global reform agenda and the work of European Forum of National Nursing and Midwifery Associations (EFNNMA) within the WHO European region.
44. A brief had been provided to the committee on the RCN contribution to the management of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) and an update had been received on the EU Joint Action on Workforce Planning and the wider EU Health Workforce Action Plan.
45. Finally, the committee had received an update on progress with the international development project in Zambia (ZUNO project).

Ethics Committee

46. Janet Holt, committee chair, attended the meeting to update us. They had met twice – on 21 November 2014 and 16 February 2015, and had welcomed three new members, Jeanette Foley, Zoe Lambert and Judith Dyson.
47. The committee had received a presentation on the RCN's approach to the management of its investment portfolio and endorsed its current approach and statement of investment principles.
48. The committee had also discussed the terms of reference for the newly established Ethics Network which will act as a sounding board for the Committee. Its inaugural meeting will take place on 11 September 2015.
49. The committee had discussed the requirement for members to disclose payments received from pharmaceutical companies to be introduced in 2016 and on their recommendation we agreed to adopt a stance of transparency in relation to fee payments and to encourage members to co-operate fully with the new requirements to disclose payments received.

50. Finally, the committee had received feedback from the Fellows summit on older people's nursing in December 2014 and had received briefings on the Mental Capacity Act, the Leadership Alliance for the Care of Dying People and the 4 country position on assisted suicide. The committee had also received updates from the BMA Ethics Committee and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics.

Health Practitioner Committee

51. Brenda McIlmurray, chair, reported that the committee had met on 1 and 2 December 2014 and 13 April 2015.

52. The committee had a discussion on the introduction of the Care Certificate and the implications for existing staff.

53. They had also reviewed their work-plan and discussed plans for Congress 2015. Committee members had held a useful discussion with the communications team about how terminology used in all RCN publications could be more inclusive of HCAs.

54. Additionally, the committee had discussed plans for an event in the Library and Heritage Centre on the evolving role of HCAs and APs.

55. At the April meeting the committee discussed the *Shape of Caring Review*.

56. It had also been agreed that the committee should carry out a joint piece of work with the Ethics Committee to develop a version of the ethical impact assessment tool for HCAs to inform the decisions they make on a daily basis to support the guidance that is currently being revised on accountability and delegation.

Students Committee

57. Brendan Garry, chair, reported that the committee had met on 9 January and 19 February 2015.

58. New members had joined the committee in January so the primary purpose of this additional meeting was induction and to discuss the students programme at Congress.

59. The first item on the February agenda had been the RCN's international strategy and the work being done internationally for students. They had also discussed the committee's future engagement with the European Nursing Student Association (ENSA).

60. We heard that RCN student members were now associate members of NUS. The committee had also discussed how the Committee could support a campaign being led by the Vice President for Health Education with Kings College, London students union to improve the engagement and representation of nursing students within student unions across the UK.
61. The committee had received an update on the *Shape of Caring* review and noted progress on the development of the questionnaire for circulation to universities to scope the clinical skills that are currently taught as part of all pre-registration programmes in the UK.
62. They had also agreed next steps on projects to review the role of the Student Information Officer and to prepare guidance on how to make sure practice placements are successful.
63. Finally, the committee was briefed on the peer support available through RCN's Member Support Services for disabled students, discussed student input to the Healthy Workplaces Project and received an overview of the four Council consultations.

Fellows Co-ordinating Committee

64. Jane Denton FRCN, chair of the committee, informed us that the committee had met on the 2 February.
65. The committee had discussed progress on the RCN End of Life Care Project and agreed to make this the topic of the Fellows event at Congress 2015. In addition the committee agreed that the next full Fellows meeting would focus on the RCN's role in nurse education.
66. The committee had also been updated on the next steps following the Fellows summit in December 2014 on the care of older people and had received feedback from the most recent meeting of the RCN Centenary Planning Committee.

Report from the Agenda Committee

67. Stuart McKenzie, Chair of Congress, reported that the committee had now agreed the running order of the Congress agenda and this would be published on the RCN website with a clear note that the order was subject to change by Congress.
68. The committee had been very pleased with the range and number of events at Congress and this programme would also be published on the RCN website.
69. From a logistics points of view we heard that plans were very well advanced.

National Pensioners Convention

70. We received a detailed update from our representatives on the National Pensioners Convention and noted that we will be holding elections for the representatives later in the year.
71. We noted that the representatives have been extending their links and influence within the Convention as well as with other external organisations.
72. We heard that Dot Gibson, the Chair of the NPC would be speaking at an event the NPC representatives were hosting at Congress.
73. We were pleased to hear that the representatives had put forward a policy motion to the NPC's eight Biennial Delegates Conference which was held in March. The motion called for all older people to have access to skilled nursing support to assist them to take greater control over their management of long term health conditions in order to improve the quality of their life.

RCN Foundation

74. We received an update from the RCN Foundation and heard that its Board of Trustees had met on the 14 April. The Foundation had agreed that its new project grant programme would focus on the training and development of nursing staff in care homes.
75. We also noted that there were now regular meetings between the Chair of Council and the Chair of Trustees and that there was new joint working group to discuss how the two organisations could work together and support each other more effectively.
76. The Foundation Board thanked RCN Council for agreeing the new process for appointing the RCN Appointed Trustees to the Board. It is especially keen to appoint someone with experience of managing grants and assessing project and research grant applications. If you are interested in the role please go to the [RCN website](#) for more details. The closing date is the 29 May.

RCN President's and Deputy President's reports

77. Finally we received an update from RCN President Cecilia Anim and Deputy Professor Rod Thomson FRCN on their activities in the first three months of the year.

Michael Brown, Chair of RCN Council
24 April 2015