



Royal College of Nursing  
Shaping nursing since 1916

**Report to members of the meeting of RCN Council held on Wednesday  
27 and Thursday 28 April 2016 at RCN HQ, Cavendish Sq,  
London, W1G 0RN**

1. This meeting was observed by over 60 members of our country and regional boards. We were very pleased to have them with us and to be able to share information and ideas with them.
2. It was also the first full two day meeting since the new Council had been elected.

**Finance and corporate services**

3. We began our meeting with a development session on how finance, governance, planning and risk are managed within the RCN to ensure we have as an effective and sustainable organisation as possible. It was an opportunity for the Board members to contribute to this important work.
4. The workshop also set the context for the finance and corporate services section of our meeting which was chaired by the new Honorary Treasurer, Dave Dawes.
5. We received reports from the Audit and Business Committees, and then spent time reviewing the RCN's statutory annual report and financial statements for the year January to December 2015 before approving them.
6. The annual report reflects that 2015 continued to be a testing time for nursing in the current political, economic and social environment but also records some notable successes for the RCN, including record membership numbers and examples of the support we have provided to members over the past 12 months.
7. The accounts themselves reported the combined results of the RCN UK, its trading subsidiary RCN Publishing Co (RCNi) and the RCN Foundation.
8. The topline financial position was an increase in income for the Group to £89,877K from £87,831k the previous year with a total expenditure

of £80,523k compared to £82,104k to previous year.

9. We remain committed to reducing the pension fund deficit and had agreed a revised deficit recovery plan at the end of 2014 following the latest actuarial valuation.
10. Our investments provided income of £1.2m and the value of our investment portfolio stood at £53.5m at the end of the year.
11. A summary of the annual report and accounts will be published in May's issue of *RCN Bulletin*. Members attending the AGM in Glasgow on 21 June will be able to ask questions of the Honorary Treasurer. To find out more about the AGM and to read the full annual report when it is published please go to [www.rcn.org.uk/agm2016](http://www.rcn.org.uk/agm2016)
12. The remainder of this section of our agenda was devoted to scrutinising the management accounts, the risk register and our key performance indicators. Overall the organisational position looks healthy.

### **National Pensioners Convention**

13. We welcomed Professor Dame June Clark to the meeting to present the first report of the newly elected NPC representatives. She talked about their immediate priority being their contribution to the Pensions Parliament in June and plans for a joint fringe at RCN Congress with the Older Peoples' Forum.
14. June also informed us that she had joined the NPC's Health and Social Care working group.
15. June expressed some concerns about the resources available to the representatives and the role of the network itself and the way it was linking into the RCN. The Chair of Council confirmed that discussions with the group about these issues were ongoing.

### **Governance Support Committee report and RCN elections**

16. Gill Cort, Chair of the Governance Support Committee, reported on the committee's most recent meeting and we noted that a significant portion of time had been spent reviewing the recommendations of the Council Review Group. Gill had since met with the Students and Health Practitioners Committees to talk to them about the changes they would like to see to the way their Committees are working.
17. On the committee's recommendation we agreed the appointment of Electoral Reforms Services Ltd as an assurer, and we agreed a new regulation to provide for such an assurer. This is a new legal requirement following changes to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 which now requires trade unions to appoint an

assurer to verify their membership figures.

18. We also agreed the detailed procedures for the RCN elections in 2016 noting that members will be voting at the AGM to simplify the nominations process for the election of Council members, including the President and Deputy President.
19. Another change is that candidates for the Welsh Board and other Welsh places on Council and the committees to be able to submit their statements in Welsh as well as English in future.

### **HR reports**

20. David Cooper, Director of Organisational Capability and Change, presented the RCN's health and safety annual report and the HR annual workforce report for 2015.
21. The first of these reports demonstrates health and safety performance year on year and we noted that, overall, the RCN is a low risk organisation with a small number of accidents/incidents reported. Where specific departments or offices had been audited the audits were very positive though there was a small amount of non-compliance on some areas of mandatory training and DSE assessments which is now being addressed.
22. The second report was the RCN's annual workforce report and we noted that there were no significant concerns relating to RCN staff. We were reminded that the RCN was number 10 in the Sunday Times 100 Best not for profit organisations to work for. We noted that we had been provided with feedback and recommendations from the survey results which will be taken on board this year as we continue to develop our reputation as a model employer.

### **EU referendum**

23. We considered a paper on the EU referendum and considered the implications both for nursing and for the RCN itself.
24. Following the discussion it was Council's view that the RCN should not adopt a position on whether or not to leave the EU but to provide information to members and encourage debate, and to encourage members to participate in the vote to ensure that the nursing voice is heard.
25. We would also like to remind members that the referendum takes place the day after Congress finishes and if you cannot vote in person you can apply for a postal vote – you can find out more about how to do this at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

## **Awards Committee**

26. We agreed a number of further recommendations from the Awards Committee for Fellowships and Awards of Merit. These awards will be announced at RCN Congress and will be bestowed at the opening ceremony on Saturday 18 June.

## **Student bursary consultation**

27. Janet Davies updated us on the latest developments on the Department of Health consultation on the proposed withdrawal of bursaries for nursing students in England. We noted that the RCN will be submitting a detailed and evidence based response following the widest possible engagement with members.
28. We are deeply concerned that the proposals are “high risk” and believe the changes should be immediately halted until a suitable funding model is agreed.
29. Our concerns are focussed on the potential impact on the future education and supply of nursing. We have significant worries about the consultation document itself and the assumptions it makes.
30. We believe that the proposals as they stand could deter prospective students from the profession and risk worsening the nursing shortage in England. There is a real risk of a detrimental impact on patient care and the provision of comprehensive health services.
31. We will be surveying our members to find out their views and to inform our response to the consultation. The survey will be available here [www.rcn.org.uk/studentbursaries](http://www.rcn.org.uk/studentbursaries). We encourage all members to complete it as soon as possible.

## **Member access to information project**

32. We were updated on this important piece of work which aims to facilitate greater member to member communication and we approved the phased roll out plan to a number of member groups.
33. The project is focussing on the development of a portal which will be used by members to access a range of channels with which to communicate with their fellow members whilst ensuring that the RCN continues to meet its data protection and other legal obligations.
34. Training is a key element of the project and is included in the phased roll out plan.

## **Council review report and recommendations**

35. At our March meeting we agreed to support the recommendations of the Council Review Group and are currently engaging with members at board and committee meetings throughout the organisation. The information is also on the RCN website here <http://www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved/consultations/con-rcn-0316>
36. We discussed the proposed transition plan and agreed the detail of how the recommendations will be implemented over the next 5 years.
37. Members are reminded that in order to implement the recommendations in full, there would need to be a change to the Standing Orders to amend the composition of Council. This will be voted on at the AGM in June in Glasgow.

## **AGM 2016**

38. We agreed the agenda for the 2016 AGM including the special resolutions on which members will be asked to vote. Details about these and the Agenda itself will be posted onto the website in the next few days – go to [www.rcn.org.uk/AGM2016](http://www.rcn.org.uk/AGM2016) for the latest information.

## **Q and A**

39. The latter part of our meeting was devoted to a helpful Q and A session in which we discussed a range of issues including our disappointment at the 1% pay award which has been part of an ongoing downward trend for nurses pay in recent years.
40. We also expressed our fears for potential attacks on unsocial hours payments in light of the government's agenda for seven day working.
41. We also discussed issues around safe staffing levels and the RCN's work in this area.

## **Communications**

42. We concluded our confidential meeting with a workshop on Communications in which we noted the excellent recent communications activity and an update on the centenary plans followed by a "hands-on" session on working with the media and how to use social media.

## **Chief Executive & General Secretary's report to Council**

43. The open session of our meeting began with a report from Janet Davies. Council receives weekly updates from our Chief Executive & General Secretary and Janet expanded on the following key areas of work at this time:
44. We heard that regular meetings were being established between the RCN, RCNi and the RCN Foundation to agree those activities the Group should be working together on to deliver our shared objects in the most effective way.
45. In order to continue to keep membership subscriptions as low as possible work is underway to look at building on our commercial income sources. A report on this work will come to a future Council meeting.
46. We heard about the enormous amount of work that had been undertaken to provide support for members on Revalidation.
47. Janet also talked about the key challenges for the RCN. These included the recruitment of representatives, and responding to the growing impact of integration and devolution.
48. We noted that the Countries had been hard at work preparing manifestos and briefings in advance of the upcoming elections and building their relationships with potential new politicians.
49. Following discussions across the organisation our response to the HEE consultation on the Nursing Associate had been submitted and we await their final report .
50. The RCN had published its interim position on the future of Student Funding and this includes our comments on the changes to bursaries and funding for university places. We are working hard to engage with as many members as possible about this issue.
51. We heard about some of Janet's recent external engagements, including giving evidence to the Home Affairs Committee to inform their work with the College of Policing.
52. Janet also expanded on her comments about the need for more focussed research in nursing and explained how they had been mis-interpreted on Twitter.

## **RCN Northern Ireland Pay Campaign**

53. Our Northern Ireland Council member Fiona Devlin gave a report on the Pay Campaign. We noted that a successful result had been achieved as a result of strong leadership from the Board and wide

engagement with and from our members. We congratulated the Northern Ireland on the success of this campaign.

### **Nursing Practice and Policy Committee**

54. The committee had discussed the priorities for Nursing in 2016 and focused in detail on credentialing and clinical fellowships.
55. They had received updates on the election campaigns in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the content of the RCN manifestos and briefing documents.
56. The committee discussed and gave feedback on the key messages in the RCN response to the Nursing Associate consultation. The RCN position supports a senior support role under the instruction of a nurse role and recommends that more work is carried out on the role of assistant practitioners.
57. The committee discussed the RCN's Public Health Policy paper.
58. We noted that the committee had given careful thought to plans for an initiative addressing health problems relating to weight and how to ensure this issue for the profession is addressed with sensitivity.
59. The committee agreed to change the Imaging Forum to a Network, to merge the Forensic and Criminal Justice Nursing Forums and an amendment to the name of the Critical Care and Flight Nursing Forum.
60. We noted that the committee will be closely involved in the work that followed from the RCN Mentorship Summit held on 29 April.

### **Membership and Representation Committee**

61. The committee has been working on its work programme and has agreed its priority areas and the outcomes against which it will evaluate their effectiveness as a Committee at the end of the year.
62. One of the committee's agreed priorities is equality and inclusion. They have set up a sub-group to look at equality and inclusion issues relating to the support provided to all our members and this work will feed into the development of the RCN's strategy. This work will include how the RCN works with its retired members.
63. Another priority is Membership and ensuring the definitions are fit for purpose for the future. The committee may need to review the membership categories following the outcome of the Nursing Associate consultation later in the year.

64. The committee received their regular updates on matters relating to Pay, Terms and Conditions and discussed in detail the pay award. The committee endorsed the approach being taken by the RCN's negotiators on Agenda for Change which is to be willing to engage and present ideas for discussion, and to continue on a four country basis. The committee will be looking closely at the lessons learned from the Northern Ireland campaign, the Junior Doctor's contract dispute, and the Student Bursary demonstrations and will be taking these forward in their work on the RCN's Pay Campaign.
65. The committee received political updates on the progression of the Trade Union Bill and possible amendments, and discussed the election manifestos and lobbying activities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
66. The committee is continuing to work closely with the Trade Union Governance Group and the UK Representative Committees to establish effective ways of working and to ensure that information and reports flow through the governance and representative structures.
67. We were very pleased to receive Annual Reports from all three of the UK Representative Committees. We encourage members to read these reports and see the breadth of the work the committees are involved with on behalf of our members and representatives. You can access each committee page here: <http://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/how-the-rcn-is-governed/rcn-committees-and-groups>

### **International Committee**

68. The committee had discussed reports on the agreed Sustainable Development Goals and the TTIP debates.
69. We heard about the importance of learning from the work of our international partner organisations and agreed to the committee's recommendation that the RCN's international project work is broadened to include a portfolio of projects to contribute to our international purpose and focus on where the RCN can add value.
70. The committee has also been looking at international models of nursing, in particular the Burtzoorg model from the Netherlands and the Magnet model from the USA.

### **Health Practitioner Committee**

71. The committee discussed and agreed their priorities for 2016 and is particularly keen to develop the professional agenda for HCAs.

72. Committee members are looking to improve their visibility locally and raise the profile of the role of HCAs across the organisation. They will be carrying out a programme of visits to achieve these goals.
73. The committee has met with HCA leads from across the countries and regions and discussed how to work together more effectively.
74. The committee received an update from the RCN Director of Nursing on the college's work on professional issues and discussed how HCA's could engage with that work. There was also an update from the Employment Relations Department on the impact of the Living Wage and how this would affect HCAs.

### **Student Committee**

75. The committee discussed how they can work better with other parts of the organisation to ensure their voice is heard on major issues such as the changes to student bursaries and funding and the nursing education agenda.
76. There was a presentation on the programme in place in the West Midlands region to support Student Information Officers to shape and develop their roles.
77. The committee would like to see more consistent ways of working being adopted across the RCN, building on this example of good practice.
78. The committee discussed the key messages in response to the consultation on the changes to bursaries and in preparation for lobbying activities.
79. The committee continues to work with the National Union of Students and is producing a joint leaflet to signpost nursing students to the right sources of advice and information.
80. The committee also received updates on the RCN's professional offer and were very excited to learn that the RCN Foundation had offered support for ten students to apply to attend the RCN's International Centenary Conference.

### **Fellows Co-ordinating Committee**

81. The full Fellows meeting had discussed the review of the Fellowships. It had been agreed to recommend that no changes should be made to

the current process until the processes for credentialing and fellowships by application had been agreed.

82. The committee had discussed how to ensure that the range of views held by the membership informed the RCN response to the consultation on student bursaries and agreed to work with the Students committee and the Education Forum work on this.

### **RCN Foundation**

83. The Foundation has been represented at a number of centenary events that have taken place and their involvement will continue throughout the year.
84. Work has been ongoing on a proposal to amalgamate some of the Foundation's charitable funds with the support of the Charity Commission. Council will be receiving more details on the proposals shortly.
85. The new Lamplight Support Service went live on 1 March and we heard about the value this was bringing to nurses in hardship. The outcomes of this service were measureable in a quantitative way. For example, the data showed that the average estimated increase in the income of an individual who had gone through the assessment process is £2,683 per year.
86. We heard about various fundraising initiatives that were scheduled for later in the year and Council members are keen to take part in these.

### **President and Deputy President's Reports to Council**

87. RCN President, Cecilia Anim, highlighted some of her activities in recent weeks. She commented that the same issues were raised at all the workplaces she had visited, namely concerns about mounting work pressures and demands, staffing levels, lack of resources, complex care needs of patients and the impacts of cuts on care.
88. She emphasised that her principle message to everyone was that united the RCN could ensure that the voice of nursing was heard.
89. The most positive aspects of her visits was being able to listen to members concerns and signposting them to the numerous resources available to them through RCN membership.
90. The Deputy President, Rod Thomson FRCN, reported to Council on his main activities in support of the President, in particular his work on Public Health policy and the impact of public health funding cuts on school nursing and health visiting.

**Michael Brown, Chair of RCN Council**  
**29 April 2016**