



Royal College of Nursing
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Council

Date of meeting:	08 December 2016
Title of Paper:	National Pensioners Convention update
Presented by:	Professor Dame June Clark, FRCN
Is a decision required? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

1. Introduction

This is the third report of the 2015-2017 cohort of the members elected to represent the RCN at the National Pensioners Convention. It covers the first year of our term of office January – December 2016.

2. Activities 2016

During this period the RCN representatives have attended meetings of the NPC National Council, the NPC Executive Committee, and the four working parties (Health and Social Care WP, Womens WP, Minority Elders WP, and Trade Union WP) on which we have members. Two members (Joyce Forge and Cordelia Okwusogu) also attended the Pensioners Parliament June 14/15 in Blackpool, a full report of which is available on request. We have tried to spread the (considerable) workload among the four elected representatives and the two additional members of working parties as follows:

- NPC National Council and Executive: June Clark, Cordelia Okwusogu, and Kate Fitzsimmons have represented the RCN on these committees which are the NPC's business and management committees. Kate has taken most of the workload, especially during June's period of illness.

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Cordelia writes: “These meetings actually broadened my experience of how major organisations and networks of retired members with NPC are playing big roles in the promotion of the welfare of the masses of retired members and the generational issues and future retired members. I have enjoyed working with all retired Pensioners and my colleagues during our monthly teleconferences”.

Kate Fitzsimmons has attended four Executive Committee meetings and the two NPC Council meetings. Kate believes that it would be helpful if the RCN could consider ;

- The development of an RCN advice sheet for members about to retire. This would include information around the state pension, and access to benefits / support to those in retirement
- The development of a dementia guide to enable people to recognise signs and symptoms and where they can access information from

Most of the NPC’s detailed work, however, is undertaken by the eight working parties, on four of which we have members.

- **Minority Elders Working Party:** Our member on this committee is Joyce Forge. The two most important tasks on which the committee is currently working are (a) identifying the specific issues of concern to black and ethnic minority elders and (b) advising on ways in which the NPC's engagement with black and ethnic minority elders could be improved. The work of this committee is clearly relevant to the current work on the MRC on Equality and Inclusion Strategy.

- **Womens Working Party:** Jackie Burns writes:

“I have attended 3 out of 4 Women’s Working Group meetings and a seminar at which the main speaker was Anita Wright, President of the National Association of Women (Report available). The WWG issue a quarterly newsletter, Exchange, which contains reports on issues and lobbying etc. I have contributed with short articles on historical women in nursing - Florence Nightingale, Mary Seacole, and Edith Cavell. Items discussed by the working party include:

- *Pensions*
- *Attendance allowance lottery*
- *Inclusion of women in the NPC*
- *Disenfranchising older people without use of technology (digital exclusion)*

Many of these things match the concerns of the RCN. It is a fairly effective group, integrated well with the NPC, but I feel it would be more relevant if the RCN gave guidance on subjects to introduce to the group. I have not had guidance from the RCN on subjects that would be useful to put forward, and this would be helpful.”

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The work of this committee would also be relevant to the MRC's work on Equality and Inclusion but we have not found ways of achieving the integration necessary for proper briefing. Jackie has decided not to seek another term of membership

- **Trade Union Working Party:** Dougie Lockhart writes:

"I've found this extremely eye opening in how active and involved other Trade Union retired members are in their Unions and the different arrangements for them, in many instances outstripping our involvement or inclusion by the RCN. At the recent Conference we had speakers including a Labour MP and Deputy General Secretary of the TUC plus an enlightening presentation by the NPC secretary Despite my long history of Trade Union involvement with the RCN and nationally I've learned a lot by representing the RCN on this group. I'm happy to stand again [for election] as I've really enjoyed the interaction with the other trade unions and feel I can give a Scottish perspective as well as my experience of the past"

- **Health and Social Care Working Party:** June Clark writes:

"Following resolution of the confusion about achieving membership of this working party, I have attended three meetings. This is an extremely active group whose agenda directly coincides with the RCN's agenda. The group has an excellent newsletter and a workplan which it updates at each meeting, which includes implementation of the motion achieved by Joyce Forge at the last NDC meeting that " calls on UK Governments and Health Departments to ensure that all older people 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". NPC is now looking to RCN for guidance on action. I have presented papers on parish nursing, and the differences in the Wales NHS compared with England. The main issue currently being worked on is end-of-life care. I have briefed Amanda Cheesley (who did not know about the NPC or its work) and we are currently considering ways of bringing together the very different perspectives of our two organisations on this topic "

It is clear from these reports that work is needed to provide for better communication and integration of the work of our two organisations. While the RCN representatives can contribute their individual expertise, the lack of integration of the Network within the RCN inhibits their ability to represent RCN views or to feed back what they learn into RCN policy making. For example RCN representatives need to know how far the RCN wishes to align itself with core NPC policies, and whether or to what extent it wishes to join in the NPC's many campaigning events. Conversely the RCN should draw on the more advanced work of the NPC on issues such as pensions and women's and minority elders' rights

However, while the potential for increasing the influence of both organisations through such activities is huge, It will not be possible to maintain this level of

activity during 2017 because the budget of £6,000 which was fixed in 2014 did not include provision either for the 2016 increase in affiliation fees (to £2250) or for attendance at the 2017 Biennial Delegate Conference (four places, two days residential) to be held in March 2017.

3. Communications

Our last report to Council (April 2016) reported the considerable work undertaken to maintain communication among the RCN representatives and between these representatives and the Network members, through regular teleconferences, newsletters and the website.

3.1 For the RCN representatives we continue to hold monthly teleconferences, the purpose of which is to share information including reports of meetings attended by individual members, to allocate participation in forthcoming activities, and to discuss other issues relevant to retired members. Participation has been extended to include a standing invitation to Dawne Garrett (RCN staff lead on Older People and Dementia. We have also been pleased to welcome Rachel Purkett (advice about website) and Wendy Irwin (MRC Equality and Inclusion Strategy). However the representatives agreed early on that teleconferences alone are not enough and that a face to face meeting was essential. This meeting took place on 23rd September 2016.

3.2 Communications with members of the Network (Newsletters)

We continue to send a bi-monthly Newsletter, using the bulk email facility, to the 1,100 members who have “opted in” to the Network. However, complaints that these newsletters are not reaching all members continue, and the bulk email system does not permit responses. We appear not to have been included in the “members’ email addresses” project

3.3 RCN website.

Following work with Rachel Purkett and Yasmin Clarke we are now included in the list of forums and networks and we now have a page in the website. However the website is still very difficult to use, with terminology that is not easy to understand (e.g. who would know that to find out about the NPC Network you have to click on “Get involved”, or where would you look for latest network news), and has a very rigid structure which means that there is no scope for changing any of the screens. Instructions on how to access the Network pages were included in the September Newsletter, but we would like to have somewhere on the site a link to such instructions, but are told that this is not possible.

4. Congress 2017

Following the successful 2016 Fringe meeting hosted by the Nursing Older People Forum, we hope to hold another fringe meeting, probably on the topic of end-of-life care. Since we have no formal role at Congress and no budget

for attendance, we are trying to ensure a presence via another membership entity.

5. Status within the RCN

This continues to be a major source of frustration. A meeting with Chris Cox requested by the RCN representatives several months previously was eventually scheduled for 23rd September. The issues were set out in detail in the Network's last report to Council (April 2016). Members were shocked and angry that the agenda which they had circulated a month previously which detailed the issues that they wanted to discuss was changed unilaterally a few hours before the meeting to consist of a PowerPoint presentation about the principles of the MRC Strategy on equality and inclusion. In response to the invitation from Wendy Irwin, we subsequently submitted detailed "evidence" to the MRC a summary of which is:

"We require implementation of the following stated aims of the Equalities and Inclusion Strategy:

- ***"break down barriers to participation and progression in union structures". e.g. removal of the barriers to appointment and election to all roles within the RCN;***
- ***"conference/seminar at national level" for retired members;***
- ***Reserved seats to improve the representation on their senior decision making bodies" e.g. voting membership of RCN Congress;***

. We believe that the best way of realising the aspirations of the members of the NPC Network is to

- ***formalise its position within the RCN as a national membership entity,***
- ***restore its original title as the RCN Retired Members Network,***
- ***extend its terms of reference to include but not be limited to, work within the NPC.***

We propose that its terms of reference should be the same or similar to those already adopted and agreed by the existing Northern Region Retired Members Group namely:

- ***To consult on national and regional policies and procedures to support and reflect nursing issues***
- ***To develop and implement appropriate mechanisms and skills in support of media campaigns e.g. lobbying,***
- ***Develop close links with Regional Retired Members Groups, RCN Boards and Branches to ensure integration within the RCN structures and representation of members views within the NPC***
- ***Develop close links with RCN Officers to contribute to Education, Development & Training, Recruitment and Equality and Diversity agendas***

- ***Establish, where appropriate, sub working groups in order to progress issues outside of the group meetings that will be reported back for discussion and agreement***
- ***Ensure appropriate communication mechanisms so that information is cascaded to and from the Group in a consistent and timely manner***
- ***Keep abreast of developments in respect of current issues as they affect nursing***
- ***Develop where possible links with local health committees e.g. LINKS, Health and Social Affairs Scrutiny committees, clinical commissioning groups”***

PLUS

- ***To represent the RCN in the National Pensioners Convention***

4. Status within the NPC

Our status within the NPC remains equivocal. Our right to affiliation depends on recognition of the RCN as an “organisation of pensioners, with at least 5000 members”. The current membership of the NPC network is 1,100. We have been assured that the NPC is willing to accept the entire RCN as affiliated; however this position is clearly open to challenge if an unfriendly member chose to challenge it. One solution would be to expand the membership of the NPC network into a Retired Members Network which would be more attractive to members and encourage an increase in membership from the present 1,100 to 5,000; this would meet the affiliation requirement of “an organisation of pensioners”

5. Summary

The summary given in the last report to Council said:

“It is now three years since this network was established. Whatever the reasons and the past history, the present position is not sustainable and needs to be resolved as soon as possible both in order to enable the RCN to maximise its influence in NPC and to meet the wishes of the RCN’s retired members”

We would like to acknowledge the help and support we continue to receive from Gerry O’Dwyer and Jenny Lillywhite.

Submitted by June Clark (co-ordinator), on behalf of:

Kate Fitzsimmons
Joyce Forge
Cordelia Okwusogu
Jackie Burns
Dougie Lockhart

November 12th 2016