



Royal College of Nursing
Shaping nursing since 1916

RCN Council

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Title of Paper:	Communications report
Presented by:	Jane Hughes, Deputy Director of Communications
Is a decision required? No <input type="checkbox"/>	

Introduction

This report summarises the activity of the Communications Department between July and November 2016. Highlights include awards for our work on personalised Congress delegate packs, the successful annual dinner, and shortlisting for our promotion of International Nurses' Day in May. We have concentrated on highlighting key issues including the development of the Nursing Associate role, the ongoing pay campaign and our ask of the Pay Review Body, and the implications of the Brexit result for our members.

Communications strategy

The aim of the Communications Department is to enable the RCN to use all its communications channels to engage effectively with our different stakeholder audiences in order to help deliver our mission successfully. We seek:

- to enable the RCN to be the voice of nursing and speak effectively for our members
- to strengthen the RCN's voice and influence and use that to shape health policies on behalf of our members and their patients
- to campaign for improvements for our members and the whole of nursing
- to promote excellent nursing practice
- to promote the value of RCN membership by engaging effectively with potential and current members

We aim to engage our members and use their voices to strengthen our messages.

By ensuring that the right people hear and are influenced by what we say, our goal is to help make nursing practice the best it can be, and to empower nurses to deliver high quality patient care.

UK-wide communications work

Nursing Counts pay campaign

This continues to gather momentum, with good member involvement.

Since we last reported in July, the RCN has submitted evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body and communicated our new demands to members. More than 60,000 people (at time of writing) have signed a petition asking the government to 'scrap the cap' on NHS pay, 1,400+ have written to the Chancellor to speak out on pay in just a few days, and thousands more have engaged with the campaign by requesting Nursing Counts campaign packs, posting on social media or using our pay calculator. Our evidence to the PRB and Labour Market Review gained supportive coverage in national, local and trade media.

We continued to promote these asks in the build-up to the Autumn Statement, including testing and refining new ways to reach more members.

If the petition reaches 100,000 and is successful in prompting a Westminster debate, we will develop further campaign actions, supporting members to urge their MPs to attend and speak.



Brexit

We have continued to promote messages about the effects of Brexit on the nursing workforce, as well as condemning racist behaviour towards non-British nursing staff. This has included extensive media coverage in national, regional and trade media, and discussion on social media.

International Centenary Conference

We have done a programme of promotion of the conference, using both online channels (digital and social media) and media. We have planned a series of proactive media stories to run during the conference, themed around subjects being discussed at the conference, as well as offering interviews with keynote speakers.

Annual Dinner

We organised what was on course, at time of writing, to be a successful annual dinner, attended by most of our key stakeholders, including NHS Chief Executive Simon Stevens and Health Minister Philip Dunne. The campaigns team developed a film highlighting the work of ANPs, which will also be used to promote our Credentialing programme.

Member to member communication

The first branch officials and forum chairs have been trained and given access to the new Member Communication Centre (MCC).

Most forums, regions and countries now have a dedicated Facebook page or group as part of the MCC, and these are showing promising growth and signs that they will promote better communications.

Trained officials also have access to blogging, email and website communications through the MCC.

Overall, the response to MCC has been very positive. However, take-up of the channels by trained members has been slightly slower than expected, so we are exploring ways to support more members to use them.

Membership research

The Communications and Marketing teams have begun a joint piece of member research aimed at improving how we communicate with members. We're grateful to the Council members and staff who helped us develop the research brief. The work comprises focus groups, telephone interviews and an all-member survey. The initial findings from the focus group research are already informing our work, and we expect the final results shortly.

RCN website development

Development of the RCN website continues, with a number of projects planned to improve the site for visitors. To name three: blogging functionality has been introduced recently, in-page commenting will be piloted soon, and work is under way to refresh and improve the Congress website. Please continue to give your feedback and ideas for the site as these help us to make improvements.

RCN Bulletin and other member magazines



We've covered a broad range of topics, including parish nursing, RCN fellows, clinical procurement, CCTV in care homes, developing BME talent, and using online media to further nursing research – all highlighting member activity and/or RCN services. We've also updated members on pay negotiations, the implications of the Brexit vote, and the RCN centenary. Articles are generating a good volume of feedback from members.

We published a centenary supplement, 100 Years of Activism, with September's Activate, representing work being undertaken across the UK. We're promoting this as a resource for highlighting and celebrating the work of activists and potentially recruiting more of them.

We have commissioned market research to run alongside the broader member research, to help us understand members' perceptions of Bulletin, how it could be improved, and what they most want from it.

Corporate Communications and Publishing team

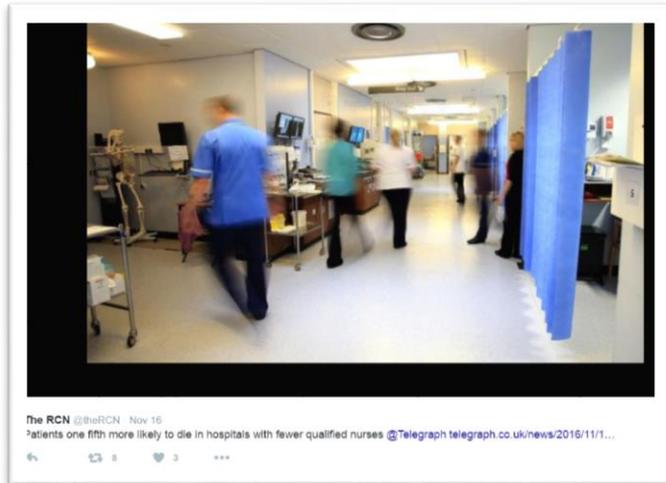
The Corporate Communications team supports colleagues across the organisation to design and develop high quality printed materials and to support communication of organisational issues. Our work was recognised when we won two awards for the innovative work we did with the Membership Team in Cardiff for the 2016 Congress delegate packs.

We have worked on a wide variety of projects. Highlights include the design and installation of the Public Health exhibition with the Library and Heritage team at HQ, which uses the space in a different way and takes a more creative approach. We have supported the communication and promotion of the Presidential and Council elections; we produced the order of service for the beautiful Remembrance Ceremony at the Guards' Chapel. We worked with the Nursing Department on a substantial revision to the RCN Standards for Infusion Therapies guidance, and with ERD on the 2016 Labour Market Review.

Agenda Item 6

Media

The main subject areas for our media coverage since July have been the implications of the new Nursing Associate role, safe staffing and the risks of reducing skillmix, the effects of Brexit on the nursing workforce, our Labour Market Review, pressures on A & E units, the drop in school nurses, new asthma guidelines and end of life care. In all, we have generated a healthy 1033 individual items of RCN coverage in national and regional press between July and October, alongside extensive coverage in the nursing and healthcare trade press.



The RCN's Labour Market Review was published in October, warning that a "perfect storm" could engulf the nursing workforce, due to low morale and the effects of Brexit, pay restraint and the loss of bursaries. There was also prominent coverage on the BBC and in The Guardian on the RCN's work on treating transgender patients, and coverage on the BBC of the RCN's concerns around children's mental health services.

November saw prominent coverage of the RCN's concerns around a drop in mental health nursing numbers, and an in-depth interview with Janet Davies setting out the RCN's position and concerns about the new Nursing Associate role, which was followed up in a number of national newspapers.

UK-wide communications work

Eastern Region

Following the announcement by East and North Herts NHS Trust that nurses could receive higher pay in return for giving up their NHS pension contributions, the RCN Eastern communications team, in partnership with HQ colleagues, launched a campaign to warn members about the risks. This included emails, media, and social media - used to highlight our concerns and point to relevant resources, and highlight personal stories about the consequences of opting out of the pension scheme. Going forward, we will continue to update members on the dispute and conciliation process and issue press releases as appropriate.

Agenda Item 6

E and W Midlands:

We have covered a range of issues over the last four months. Highlights include strong media coverage for our work highlighting pay rises for NHS directors while more junior staff are living with below-inflation increases, and coverage highlighting concerns about the future status of non-EU nurses.

Communications Department stats for 2016:

150,000 RCN publications downloaded
2767 RCN media pieces printed, broadcast and posted online
523 million reached by our media coverage
113,000 centenary membership badges given out
1800 entries to the Christmas card competition
500,000 views of our centenary poem video
5000 miles travelled across the UK by our centenary banner
5.4 million RCN magazines distributed:

- Over 5.3 million copies of Bulletin
- 9,900 Activate
- 80,000 Student magazines
- 36,000 Health+ Care

10.5 million people reached by #RCN16
73,092 pageviews of the #NursingCounts pay calculator on 9 March 2016 , the busiest ever day for the RCN website
10.5 million pageviews of the RCN website
148,000 hours spent on the site
132,376 files downloaded
1,373 email campaigns sent
7,703 social media posts sent
28,215 New Facebook Fans
11,020 New Twitter Followers
65 million social media impressions
275,460 links clicked

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