



Royal College of Nursing
Shaping nursing since 1916

Report to members of the meeting of Council held on Wednesday 20 and Thursday 21 July 2016 at RCN HQ, Cavendish Sq, London, W1G 0RN

This report is a summary of the confidential and open sessions of the meeting

EU referendum

1. We began our meeting with a reminder that the exit from the European Union would be a protracted and lengthy process and that it is becoming increasingly clear that there is no defined exit plan.
2. However, we are already noting some immediate concern about the potential impact on nursing staff from the European economic area. The RCN is monitoring the impact on the nursing workforce carefully, and ensuring there is support in place for all our members.
3. The long term significance will be more apparent once all the detailed negotiations are in place and we can then assess the full impact on nursing and the RCN itself.

Report of the Agenda Committee

4. First we congratulated Stuart McKenzie on being re-elected as Chair of Congress for a further two-year term. BJ Waltho has also been re-elected as Vice Chair. Both were elected unopposed.
5. We agreed that Congress 2016 in Glasgow had been a success and thanked the new Agenda Committee members, Maureen Dolan, Tony McGeown and Cat Forsyth, on their contribution to a very successful week.
6. We heard that following the untimely death this year of Dominic Walsh, Jane-Elizabeth Tooke would be taking the vacant place on the committee. She had received the next highest number of votes in the

election in 2015 which makes her eligible under the current Congress constitution rules.

7. Work is now beginning on the 2016 agenda items and reports will be made to the Council committees in advance of next year's report back to Congress.
8. We noted also that the Agenda Committee will be considering a more detailed report on Congress 2016 at their October meeting, and this will include the feedback from the evaluation survey that was sent out to delegates after Congress.

Branch funding

9. We considered the feedback that had been received from the consultation on branch funding. The consultation had been about the funding from 2016 once historic branch funds had ceased.
10. The responses were remarkably consistent with most saying they wished to keep branch administration funding at the current level and would like more support to fund local CPD activity, and to fund non-voting members to attend Congress.
11. We agreed with the recommendations of the Business Committee that funding for branches should continue at current levels.
12. This will include branch administration funding on the current per capita basis as now.
13. In addition Council agreed that £200k (the equivalent of the historic funding) should be allocated in 2017 to boards (again on a capita basis) to support branch activity.
14. We hope this new funding arrangement will enable boards to provide more support to branches to engage with, and better meet the needs of, local members.
15. Boards will work with their branches to make the best use of the available funds for local CPD events, recruitment and retention activity, and lobbying and campaigning activity in addition to supporting non-voting members to attend Congress
16. Boards will report to Business Committee and Council on how this additional funding is being used.

Governance Support Committee

17. We were updated on the meeting of the Governance Support Committee held in May.

18. We were very pleased to note that members standing for Welsh seats in the elections are now able to submit their candidate information in Welsh as well as English.
19. We also heard that the new process to enable students to choose their branch on the basis of either their clinical placement or their place of study, and for retired member to choose their branch on their home address or previous workplace, was now in place.

Allocation of voting places at Congress

20. We considered the feedback received from the member consultation about the allocation of voting places at Congress to support as many members as possible to attend Congress.
21. We agreed that the opportunity to apply for funding to attend Congress as a voting member should be opened up to all members of branches and forums
22. The branch and forum resources will include guidance on how to ensure that branches and forums are represented each year by a mix of members with different skills, experience and backgrounds.
23. Members are asked to note that the new guidance will be published shortly on the RCN website at <https://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/how-the-rcn-is-governed/our-governance-documents>

The AGM and the Council Review

24. In light of the questions and comments by members at the meeting about the arrangements for the AGM we have asked Governance Support Committee to consider whether there are ways we can improve our processes and look at how we can improve our communications about them to members in advance of the AGM.
25. All three special resolutions had been passed by the required 2/3 majority and agreed that the amended Standing Orders will be now published on the on the RCN website at <https://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/how-the-rcn-is-governed/our-governance-documents>
26. Just to remind you, in summary, these changes mean:
 - We now have an agreed definition of our forums in our Standing Orders

- Candidates for Council elections, including the President and Deputy President, require the support of any two RCN members rather than being nominated by branch or forum committees.
- From the start of 2018 Council will comprise of 17 members and there will be directly elected Membership and Representation and Nursing Practice and Policy Committees, enabling more members to be part of the governance of the organisation. The implementation of this work will be led by the Governance Support Committee who are meeting in September and we will be sending out regular communications and information on the detail in the coming months.

Calendar of meetings

27. We agreed our calendar of meetings for 2017. Please note that members of all the country and regional boards will be invited to attend our April meeting as usual – this will be held on 5 and 6th April in 2017 so please do make a note in your diary now.
28. Just a reminder also that Congress takes place in Liverpool next year 13 to 17 May.
29. Boards are also asked to set their meetings to have three per annum and to take place three weeks before the Council meeting dates to ensure there is sufficient time to submit their reports and feed in board responses to any Council consultations.
30. The calendar for 2017 will be published on the RCN website shortly at <https://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/how-the-rcn-is-governed>

Council Executive Team

31. We discussed a report from the recent Council Executive Team (CET) meeting – CET comprises the Chair and Vice Chair of Council as well as the chairs of the Council committees. The Chief Executive & General Secretary also attends.
32. We prepared for this week's Council meeting and reviewed the forthcoming agendas for all the committee meetings coming up in the next few months.

Financial and corporate services

33. Dave Dawes, Honorary Treasurer, chaired this session. We reviewed our risk register, performance against our key performance indicators and progress against our annual plan.
34. Boards are asked to ensure that any significant risks they identify at country or regional levels are fed up through to the corporate risk register.
35. We also approved our financial strategy and agreed the key financial assumptions for planning and budgeting in 2017.
36. The agreed priorities for 2017 are attached as an appendix to this paper. Boards and committees should use this document to influence and inform their plans and activities for 2017.
37. Given the stable financial position of the organisation we were pleased to be able to agree that there will be no increase in subscriptions in 2017. Please ensure that this message is cascaded to members.
38. We had a very helpful and informative presentation from our investment management company about the performance of our investment portfolio in the wake of the Brexit decision. We noted that, largely due to the way we manage our portfolio, our investment position was still strong and there had been no major adverse impact following the referendum. However we also noted that there are challenges ahead, including the deficit on the staff pension scheme, so we cannot be complacent. Our investment Committee will continue to report regularly to Business Committee and Council.
39. We finished our confidential meeting with an important workshop session on developing our future commercial strategy with a view to making us still stronger as an organisation by diversifying our income sources and go even further to reduce our financial risk.

Communications report to Council

40. We began our open meeting with a report on our communications activity between April and July.
41. Highlights of the report included member and public engagement activity for Nurses' Day, including a film seen by more than 1m people, and unprecedented social media reach during Congress week
42. Communications activity had focussed on highlighting key issues such as student nurse funding, proposals to remove the nursing policy unit from the Department of Health, the value of nursing and the nursing team, and the importance of the taking part in the EU referendum.
43. We also heard about plans to test members' views on Bulletin.

Nursing Practice and Policy Committee

44. We heard from Janet Marsden, Joint Chair, that the committee had discussed the proposed new apprenticeship model and the new nursing associate role. The committee has asked the organisation to continue to campaign strongly for an education structure that is appropriate for nursing as a profession.
45. Similarly the committee is concerned about proposals to cut health visitors and looked at future opportunities to influence the final decision.

Membership and Representation Committee

46. Gordon Lees, Chair, reported that the Equality Inclusion Sub Group had held its first meeting and had started its work on the Equality and Inclusion Strategy and Implementation plan.
47. The committee had also discussed the impact of the EU referendum noting that NHS England is setting up a Brexit unit. The committee had started hearing reports of very distressed members and asked the RCN to give clear messages to reps about how best to support these members
48. The committee was also concerned about the outcome of the referendum destabilising talks about the future of Agenda for Change.
49. Gordon reported on work by the UK Learning Representative Committee to develop a new role for members who want to be active in campaigning or organising but do not want to take on the full representative role at this point.
50. The committee will be continuing to review the RCN's work in relation to the Trade Union Act, particularly the impact on facilities time, discussions on the definition of *'important public services'*, use of electronic ballots, and thresholds for industrial action.
51. The committee was also pleased to report to Council that we have now recruited 18,000 HCA members, and that overall membership figures continue to rise

International Committee

52. The committee had met on the 2 June and the main item on its agenda was ongoing work on EU and international recruitment.
53. The committee had also discussed outputs from the EU joint action on workforce planning and a seminar that had been co-hosted by RCN Wales and the MEP for Plaid Cymru on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

54. Better support for UK based RCN members involved in international volunteering and the challenges faced by UK trained nurses working in different settings was also discussed.

Ethics Committee

55. The Ethics Committee reported back on its third successful seminar which was held on 15 June in the RCN's new West Midlands office in Birmingham.
56. The subject of the seminar had been on covert filming and surveillance in care homes and was a direct result of the Congress 2015 resolution on the same subject.
57. The aim was to address the issue from the different perspectives of the nursing profession, of the nursing and care home and the residents of care homes and their families.

Health Practitioner Committee

58. Brenda McDonald presented her last report as Chair of the Health Practitioner Committee. Brenda is stepping down from Council as she begins registered nurse training and we wished her well with her future studies.
59. Brenda told us it had been a hugely positive meeting because, for the first time, they had been joined by all the country and regional committee links and had spent a lot of time together sharing information and discussing how they could work better together across the UK.
60. The committee had also been very excited to hear about the RCN's plans for developing leadership courses for HCAs.
61. The rest of the meeting had been focussed on the nursing associate consultation, the government proposals for apprenticeships and the impact of the new national minimum wage on healthcare assistants, particularly in the independent sector.

Student Committee

62. Sylvia Duval reported on two meetings of the Student Committee which had been held in April and May.
63. We heard that the committee had held workshop sessions at both their meetings on the student bursary consultation and noted how hard the Committee had worked to promote the consultation on social media and amongst their own networks.

64. The day before the May meeting students had attended the lobby of Parliament. The aim was to build cross-party support for the RCN position that the Government should halt its plans to end NHS bursaries until a long term, evidence-based, viable option has been identified. We noted that there had been some very good discussions but the committee felt very disappointed that some MPs did not attend.
65. At its meeting, the committee had also focussed on the implications for nursing students of the latest government proposals on public sector apprenticeship targets.
66. The main item in April agenda had been a discussion on how the Committee would like to work in the future. Members of the committee had identified improving the way we work with Student Information Officers as a priority and suggested that meetings should move around the UK in order to enable regional SIOs to attend and meet the Committee.
67. An important message for Boards from the committee is a need to establish better links with Board chairs to enable Committee members to take part in relevant discussions at Board level.
68. At the May meeting the committee had discussed the possibility of rolling-out the West Midlands SIO Development Programme and had agreed to feed in comments on how the programme would need to be amended for SIOs in different countries/regions.
69. In addition they had discussed plans to progress the outcomes of the practice based education summit hosted by the RCN in April 2016 and we noted that the outcomes of the student skills survey will be fed into the NMC's work on future standards.

Fellows Co-ordinating Committee

70. Jane Denton FRCN reported from the meeting of the Fellows Co-ordinating Committee which had met on 3 May 2016.
71. It finalised the arrangements for the Fellows 40th anniversary tea and public lecture on the ageing population challenge which took place on the 14 July. Speakers included Dame Joan Bakewell and Professor June Andrews FRCN. The lecture was very well attend and enthusiastically received by those who took part.
72. Jane also reported on the Congress fringe event which had been held jointly with the Health Practitioners Committee on the role of the HCA in the nursing team and plans to continue to work with the HP Committee.

RCN Foundation

73. Robert Sowney, Chair of the Board of Trustees, updated us on their latest activity.
74. Robert reported on the Foundation's presence at RCN Congress. Large numbers of members had visited the Foundation stand to find out more and contribute to the various fundraising activities taking place. These include a sponsored walk in September which aims to get 100 nurses walking the West Highland Way in Scotland as part of the RCN's centenary activities – if you are up for a challenge find out more at www.rcnfoundation.org.uk
75. Robert also told us that the Foundation is refreshing its strategy. Over the next few months, trustees and staff will be discussing and formulating the charity's new priorities for the next few years. There was a question about how the Foundation might be able to support future student nurses in light of the changes to Student Bursaries and Council was re-assured that this was something that the Trustees were very aware of and would be taking on board as part of its strategy refresh.
76. Some of the latest projects to receive support from the Foundation include the RCN's centenary project and public lecture series, the Healthy Weight Initiative project being delivered by C3 Collaborating for Health and London South Bank University, and a project to support the training of nurses in Bangladesh which the President had raised funds to support.
77. We were asked to note that the Foundation is setting up a Wales Committee to help raise its profile across Wales, and will be undertaking a project in Wales in partnership with the office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales. There are similar plans to set up a committee in Northern Ireland.
78. Finally we noted that the Foundation had been discussing with the Charity Commission the amalgamation of some of its smaller funds. There will be more information on these plans available shortly.

National Pensioners Convention

79. We noted a report from the members who represent us on the National Pensioners Convention. Members have continued to attend various meetings of the NPC as well as the Pensioners' Parliament in June in Blackpool.
80. The priorities for the NPC members continue to include communications with retired members about the network and its work,

as well as relationships with the NPC, and the status of the network within the RCN.

81. We heard that the Chair of MRC will be meeting with RCN retired members shortly to discuss how they engage with the RCN.

Reports from the President and the Deputy President

82. Both Cecilia Anim and Rod Thomson have had had a busy few months in their respective roles.
83. Cecilia had met members in visits around the UK including Brighton, Belfast, Croydon, Plymouth and Bath. She had also taken part in demonstrations about the student bursary, and had attended the House of Commons to take part in an NSPCC event lobbying for support children following abuse.
84. Rod Thomson had attended a number of RCN centenary events, and also attended a seminar in Amsterdam that had explored the global future of nursing.

Removal of student bursaries in England

85. At the end of the meeting we heard that the Government had announced its decision to go ahead and replace student bursaries with loans and Council asked the Chief Executive & General Secretary to make it clear how incensed the RCN is that the Government did not feel it appropriate to take into account the letter signed by so many allied health professions asking them to undertake further work on the impact of these plans before introducing the changes.
86. Council asked to receive further regular updates from the Chief Executive & General Secretary as work progressed given that members will be very concerned about this decision.

Appendix

