

**Report to Country and Regional Boards of the Meeting of the RCN
Council and Boards held on Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5 April 2018 at
RCN HQ, 20 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0RN**

1. Our Meeting this week was the annual opportunity for Council and Board Members to work together and discuss many of the big issues currently affecting our members.

First RCN Group Strategy

2. Our morning was spent sharing our vision for the RCN Group for the future and discussing what the priorities should be for our new strategy for the three years 2019-2021. Our workshop focussed on current activities we should be stopping; the key changes we want to see and how we go about making those.
3. The timeline is for Council to finalise the strategy at its meeting in July. The Chair of Council asked for any further thoughts to be forwarded to Governance over the next few weeks and confirmed that there would be an opportunity for Boards to comment on the draft document ahead of July.

Board Evaluation

4. Our second workshop was to discuss the findings of the board evaluation and identify priorities for action. Council and Board Members worked together to answer the following questions. Did they recognise the key them; are the priority areas of further work identified the right ones; what are the current barriers to strengthening working relationships with the different member groups in your country/region? and what examples of good practice could they share which have improved the way you have engaged with members in your country/region?
5. Again the Chair of Council asked for any further thoughts to be forwarded to Governance over the next few weeks and confirmed that there would be an opportunity for Boards to the action plan ahead of the July Council meeting.

Committee reports

Student Committee

6. The February meeting of the Committee had focussed on the arrangements for the students programme at 2018 Congress.
7. The Committee had also spent some time discussing its priorities for the year ahead and agreed to concentrate on growing the role of the SIO across all countries and regions. In particular the Committee wants to provide SIOs with opportunities to improve their political awareness and influencing skills and as a first step in this process it was noted that a workshop run by UK Parliament for SIOs on how Parliament works had been organised for 12 April
8. In addition it was noted that the Committee would be hosting a second annual yes/no debate in October entitled 'Is NHS care free at the point of use no longer sustainable?'

Health Practitioners Committee

9. The arrangements for the first HCA day on the Tuesday at 2018 Congress were noted.
10. The Chair of the Committee also highlighted a useful session the Committee had had with the RCN communications team on the language used by the RCN and RCNi to describe the make-up of the nursing profession.
11. In addition the Committee spent some time discussing the eligibility criteria for membership of the Health Practitioner category and a discussion followed at Council about the role of the nursing associate in England.

Professional Nursing Committee

12. Two key items were discussed at the first meeting of the Professional Nursing Committee – the RCN's position on consent for organ and tissue donation after death; and nurse staffing for safe and effective care across the UK.
13. The Committee agreed that a UK-wide position should be retained on consent for organ and tissue donation after death and that this should be changed to one of qualified support for an opt-out system of consent where certain safeguards, supports and resources are also in place.
14. In relation to nurse staffing for safe and effective care across the UK, the Committee commented on the high level content and objectives

that had been developed to set out what the RCN would like to see in primary legislation within the health and care system to enable staffing for safe and effective care.

Trade Union Committee

15. Much of the meeting of the March meeting of the Trade Union Committee had been spent discussing the NHS Staff Council exploratory talks on NHS pay and contract reform in England.
16. It had also prioritised a discussion about future ways of working and reporting arrangements with other parts of the governance and representative structure. The Committee had emphasised its commitment to developing strong working relationships with the UK Representative Committees and its wish to involve the Committees in delivering the trade union work programme. On the recommendation of the three UK Reps Committees it also agreed to disband the Trade Union Governance Group.

Pay Update

17. The Chair of Council then introduced a discussion on the pay deal. Lora Allford, Chair of the Trade Union Committee, opened the session by emphasising that it was the best deal that could be negotiated in the current circumstances, had no strings attached and would be funded by the Treasury and this was why the Committee had agreed to recommend the deal to members. Josie Irwin then explained how the negotiations had been negotiated, just how much the RCN had achieved, the timeline and process for the member consultation and country and regional activity planned to present the information to members at local level and address questions that members had.
18. During the discussion the following key points were recognised:
 - That the Scrap the Cap campaign had forced the issue
 - The strong leadership role the RCN had taken in the negotiations which had led to 13 of the other trade unions supporting the deal.
 - It was a significant achievement negotiating the pay deal with a Conservative Government committed to an austerity programme.
 - If the deal was not be accepted, there would not be opportunity for further negotiation in England. In addition, the £4.2 billion may not come from the Chancellor under any new deal. This would mean that employers may have to pick up any costs associated with any pay award then recommended by the Pay Review Body.

- It was important to remember that there would be the option for further negotiations in three years' time.
19. There was strong support in the room for the tough stance the Chair of the Trade Union Committee took about the unacceptable nature of some of the comments placed on Facebook and level of abuse Committee Members to which they had been subjected.
 20. The great work undertaken by Josie Irwin over the past few years and her hard work throughout this process so far was acknowledged by all those present at the meeting.
 21. The importance of members understanding the deal and how it would impact them was emphasised and the need for a strong communications plan with as many face-to-face briefings as possible was stressed.

Finance

22. We received reports from the Audit and Finance and Investment Committees, and then spent time reviewing the RCN's statutory annual report and financial statements for the year January to December 2017 before approving them.
23. The annual report reflects that 2017 continued to be a very testing time for nursing but also records some of the major achievements for the RCN. It also updates members on an equally challenging internal agenda and a time of change
24. The financial statements themselves reported the combined results of the RCN UK, its trading subsidiary RCN Publishing Co (RCNi), RCN HoldCo and the RCN Foundation.
25. A summary of the annual report and financial statements will be published in May's issue of *RCN Bulletin*. Members attending the AGM in Belfast will be able to ask questions of both the Chair of Council and the Honorary Treasurer
26. Council also agreed the revised wording of the resolution to be put to the 2018 AGM asking members to give Council a further five year dispensation to set the subscription rate.
27. 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/agm2018.
28. Terms of Reference for a review of the organisation's property strategy were approved and the tender process to procure a new catering contract for 20 Cavendish Square agreed.

29. Council also received an update on the budget for 2018 and approved a new Group Scheme of Delegation, Financial Limits Schedule and Group Financial Regulations

Awards Committee

30. We agreed a number of 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 12 May.

Congress 2018

31. The agenda is now published and on the website.
32. Delegate numbers are at over 2500 which was high for this time in the registration process.
33. There is to be a separate HCA programme on the Tuesday this year for the first time.
34. It was noted that Congress speakers this year were to include Will Hutton, political economist, academic and journalist who will talk about the current economic and political outlook for the UK, what effect that might have on the NHS and the dangers of underfunding the Health Service and Christie Watson author of the Language of Kindness: A Nurses Story.
35. With Congress in Belfast there is a special social programme which includes a reception at City Hall and a visit to the Titanic Exhibition and that a ticketing system had been put in place because demand has been so high.

Governance

36. The Chair of Council introduced the section of the agenda which covered a number of governance issues.
37. The Council reviewed arrangements for the election for the President and Deputy President which will open at Congress and agreed changes to the election procedure and eligibility criteria to stand in the election. A process document for RCN appointments was also approved and

Council agreed to recommend to Forum Governance Group that in future Forum Chairs should be appointed to be consistent with the process for appointing members of the steering committee.

38. New arrangements for the format of the AGM and managing votes at AGM's were also agreed and would be introduced for the 2018 AGM.
39. A pilot to test using task and finish groups to undertake specific pieces of work in the Annual Plan was agreed. It is hoped that these groups will support collaborative and joint working across the organisation as well as enable more members to inform work and the RCN to make optimum use of the skills and expertise of members.

Risk and Performance Reporting

40. There was a discussion led by the Chief Executive & General Secretary on the new GDPR regulations which come into effect at the end of May and the steps being taken to ensure that the RCN as a whole was compliant and the importance of members who use RCN systems and handle member data completing the training module was emphasised.
41. The Group Risk Register and the Corporate Performance Dashboard were reviewed and both led to a good discussion and requests for further information to be included for the future.