



Keeping RCN members up to date with what's going on across the Northern Region

## Raising concerns

With 24,000 nursing vacancies across the country, record numbers of patients requiring care and additional financial pressure of the NHS, our members are becoming increasingly concerned the impact staffing levels and high bed occupancy is having on patient care and safety. Many nursing staff have been feeling stressed and overstretched; they are under pressure to cover shifts and some members feel under pressure to provide cover in areas they do not feel confident to work in. As your professional trade union, we want to ensure that you receive the support, advice and guidance you need in these difficult and challenging circumstances.



Raising and responding to concerns is something that we should all be comfortable to do. But we know that being able to speak out is not always as easy as it sounds...It can sometimes be hard to know whether a situation should be raised as a concern. When considering whether to raise your concern, you should be guided by this question: has the situation caused harm or distress or if you let the situation carry on, is it likely to result in harm or distress?" If the answer is yes, you should raise your concern.

But how to go about it? The RCN has published a new resource to help you do just that. This guidance will support you to raise concerns wherever you work – in the NHS or independent sector - and whether you raise a concern as an individual or as part of a group.

It is available at <http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications>

Member discounts on Car and Home insurance  
**0800 756 8136**  
[www.rcn.org.uk/insurance](http://www.rcn.org.uk/insurance)

For TextDirect: first dial 18001. Calls may be recorded. Lines are open Mon-Fri 8am-9pm, Sat 8am-5pm, Sun 9am-5pm. The Royal College of Nursing acts as an Introducer Appointed Representative to the Liverpool Victoria group of companies for General Insurance.

## Northern hospital bed occupancy rates above safe levels

All the hospitals in the north east have been subject to intense winter pressures, consistently running above the safe bed occupancy level set by NHS England of 85 per cent. The maximum safe figure has been set at 85 percent. From December 1 to January 22 South Tyneside has the highest bed occupancy rate, at 94.2 per cent, with Northumbria a close second at 94 per cent and Gateshead third at 93.7 per cent.

“Our members are doing an incredible job in what are quite frankly unacceptable conditions,” said Glenn Turp, regional director of the RCN Northern region. “What is worrying is that crisis is becoming the ‘new normal’ and nurses are being asked to go way above and beyond what their job descriptions describe. If anyone feels that the care their department is providing is verging on unsafe, please don’t hesitate to say so: raise your concerns with a manager – and if you don’t feel able to do that, call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100 and make your concerns known to your local RCN representative or regional RCN officer.”

## It’s our NHS march



Northern region members Gordon Lees (pictured left holding the banner, next to RCN President Cecilia Anim), Rachael Ridley and Yvonne Rowlinson took part in the ‘It’s our NHS’ march on Saturday 4 March.

The RCN provided financial support to members who wished to attend.

You can catch up with the day’s action on Twitter using the hashtag [#OurNHS](#) or read the RCN’s national news story [here](#).

## RCN lobby of MPs and parliamentary NHS pay debate

RCN Northern members Jane Mannion and Gordon Lees travelled to London on 31 January to meet with MPs at an RCN lobby in the House of Commons prior to a debate on the Government's unfair pay cap on NHS pay. Agenda for Change pay rates have not risen with the cost of living, meaning that nurses are now 14 per cent worse off than they were in 2010. MPs themselves have been awarded a 14 per cent pay rise during the same time period. RCN member Jane



Mannion met her local MP at the RCN lobby and argued the case for higher nursing pay, prompting him to tweet his support following their meeting (pictured).



“When I got the email from the RCN saying they'd pay my travel to go to London to lobby MPs before they debated nursing pay on 30 January, I thought that sounded good; I wanted to do it but I thought that there'd be loads of people wanting to and I wouldn't get a place!” said Jane. “I was surprised to find that there was only Gordon Lees and me representing the Northern region. That was shocking really. We all moan about our pay, and it's easy enough to sign a petition but if we don't get out there and let our MPs know just how bad it is for us, they won't feel under pressure to represent our problems in Parliament.”

Jane talked to Phil Wilson, MP for Sedgefield and Barbara Keely, MP for Worsley and Eccles South, who is also the Shadow Minister for Mental Health and Social Care. “I work in mental health nursing,” explained Jane, “so the RCN's chief executive and general secretary Janet Davies came and grabbed me when Barbara arrived and introduced us. I told both MPs I spoke to how difficult it is for nurses that we haven't had a pay rise in such a long time, and our pay review body has recommended higher pay so basically it's not fair. In Scotland they have listened to their pay review body and been awarded a higher rise, so it is very unfair.”



MP for Newcastle North Catherine McKinnell led the debate on Agenda for Change pay, after which there was a general cross-party consensus that the Government should end its policy of public sector pay restraint.

Following the debate, Northern Ireland MP Margaret Ritchie tabled an [early day motion on nursing pay](#), which you can ask your MP to show their support for by signing. It's easy if you use the [speakout tool](#) on the RCN's [Nursing Counts](#) pay campaign website. Northern region MPs who have signed up include Ronnie Campbell, MP for Blyth, Anna Turley, MP for Redcar, and David Anderson, MP for Blaydon.

A week later, during parliamentary health questions, Health Minister Philip Dunne said nurses “do deserve a cost of living increase” and that he is awaiting the recommendations from the Pay Review Body regarding further pay changes.

## **Newcastle nurse honoured in New Year’s honours list**

Professor Mary Dunning, former governor of Tyne Metropolitan College, received an OBE in the Queen’s New Year’s Honours list for services to further and higher education and the community in the North-East of England.



As well as being a nurse, Mary is an Emeritus professor, and until her recent retirement, was the Deputy Dean of Health, Community & Education Studies at Northumbria University. She has played a central role in higher education for over three decades, becoming Assistant Director of the Newcastle School of Nursing.

According to Newcastle University’s Professor Sir John Burn, who nominated her for the honour, at a time when “a revolution was needed in nurse education, Mary Dunning was our Che Guevara.... The continued success of our hospital rests in no small part on Mary’s achievements. Throughout she has led from the front; “larger than life” and “colourful” are words used to describe her style.”

In 1995 she became Deputy Dean of the new Health Faculty at the University of Northumbria, with primary responsibility for nurse education. Now retired, she is an emeritus professor and Governor at Tyne Metropolitan College.

“I am delighted to see a nurse educator who made such a difference in our region recognised in this way,” said RCN Northern regional director Glenn Turp. “Many congratulations from all at the RCN Northern regional office.”

## **Cumbrian mental health nurse first to receive national recognition**

A mental health worker from Carlisle has been singled out and credited for his standard of excellence by The Royal College of Nursing. Thomas Kearney is a mental health practitioner based at the Carleton Clinic in Carlisle. He works with patients who have acute mental illness and has always strived to provide the best care for his patients. Now his efforts have been recognised officially; The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has credited him as being the first and only Mental Health Advanced Level Nurse Practitioner in the UK.



Thomas said: “I am very proud to have achieved this award as I believe it provides recognition of the advanced level at which I undertake my practice, and of the skills and knowledge I have and continue to strive to acquire.”

Clare Parker, Interim Director of Quality & Nursing at Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust said: “This is such a great achievement for Thomas and we are so pleased for him. It’s great to see our amazing staff being recognised and rewarded for contributing to improving patient care.”



Credentialing allows nurses to gain formal recognition of their level of expertise and skill in their clinical practice, their leadership, their education and their research in a way that is recognisable to colleagues, employers, patients and the public. The award is valid for three years after which Thomas will be able to resubmit evidence to renew it. Thomas is the only advanced nurse practitioner from the discipline of mental health to be awarded this in the United Kingdom.

## Cumbrian clinical nurse manager gains RCN credential

Davina Collins, a senior clinical nurse practitioner who manages a team of nurses in Cumbria, has also gained the RCN credential. You can read more about her award on page 12 of this month's issue of [RCN Bulletin](#).



More information on how advanced nurse practitioners can get their level of practice recognised with an RCN credential is available at [www.rcn.org.uk/credentialing](http://www.rcn.org.uk/credentialing).

## Mary Seacole Awards

Applications for the 2017 Mary Seacole Awards are now open until Friday 5 May and it would be great to have applications from the Northern region. There are 2 pre-application workshops at Unite HQ in London on 23 March and at RCN Birmingham Offices on 28 March. Further information can be found on the [NHS Employers website](#).

**Mary Seacole Awards  
2017-18**  
For nurses, midwives and health visitors



Applications are invited from individual nurses, midwives and health visitors in England to participate in the prestigious Mary Seacole Awards for 2017-18.

These awards, funded by Health Education England, provide the opportunity to undertake a specific health care project that benefits and improves the health outcomes of people from black and minority ethnic communities and contributes to your personal development.

To apply and for more information:  
Email [siobhan.smyth@rcn.org.uk](mailto:siobhan.smyth@rcn.org.uk)  
or visit [www.nhsemployers.org/maryseacole](http://www.nhsemployers.org/maryseacole)

**Closing date 5 May 2017**

Publication code onq 808



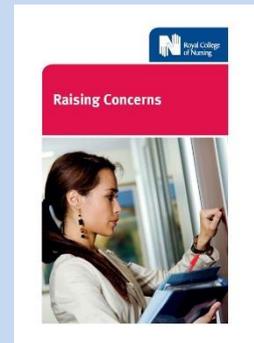
A row of logos for partner organizations: Health Education England, NHS Employers, The Royal College of Midwives, and UNISON.



## New RCN publications

### [Raising concerns](#)

This resource will support you to raise concerns wherever you work – in the NHS or independent sector - and whether you raise a concern as an individual or as part of a group.



### [Integration toolkit](#)

Across the UK, the integration of health and social care looks different. Even within each country there is not always a single approach to integrating care. Instead, you are in the midst of an ever-shifting landscape, requiring new ways of working, with many partners who may have different priorities, cultures and ways of doing things. If you are in a strategic decision-making and leadership role, this new integrating health and social care toolkit will be useful to you. It has a series of themed prompt questions for your own reflection and action. It will support you to provide confident nursing leadership as you shape, deliver and monitor safe, quality and local integrated services. We hope that this will be a practical tool to help you negotiate the complex landscape of integration.



### [A competency framework for nurses working in Parkinson's disease management](#)

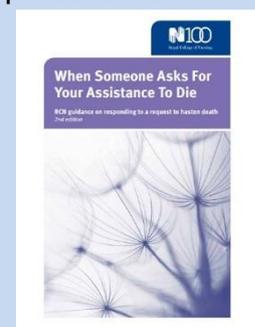
This revised competency framework describes professional criteria in the form of competencies required by experienced nurses when caring for a person with Parkinson's and atypical Parkinsonian syndromes. Support for this publication was provided by Parkinson's UK and Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialists Association.



### [When someone asks for your assistance to die](#)

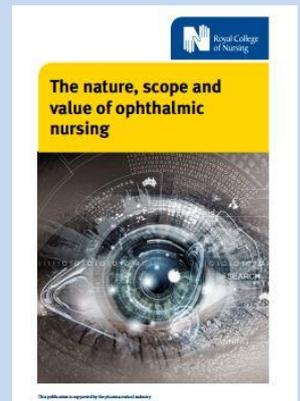
For some people, acknowledging they are dying is an essential first step towards ensuring they are able to plan to live well until they die. For others, however, talking about dying and the end of life is simply too distressing. The General Medical Council's 2010 guidance *Treatment and care towards the end of life: good practice in decision making* makes it clear that early, sensitive discussion and planning about how best to manage a patient's care is essential and that you must support them to communicate their wishes and that it is your responsibility to have these conversations.

Such taboos may also make it difficult for health professionals to uncover the concerns and fears about death and dying confronting patients and their families. But it is important to dispel some of the commonly held myths and misconceptions patients may hold about death and the process of dying such as: that it is always painful; that how they die is completely out of their hands; that pain relieving drugs only work in highly toxic doses; to be functionally dependant is undignified.



## [The nature, scope and value of ophthalmic nursing](#)

This updated publication provides a strategic vision for ophthalmic nursing and guidance on how ophthalmic nurses can help maintain and promote ocular health. It focuses on areas such as eye health, visual impairment and learning disabilities. Bayer provided an educational grant towards the update, print and dissemination of this publication.



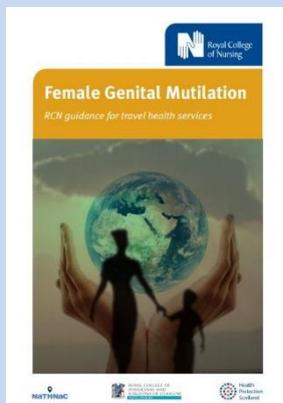
## [RCN female genital mutilation publications](#)

The RCN has been engaged in a collaborative campaign to raise awareness and understanding of female genital mutilation (FGM) among nurses, midwives and health care workers in recent years and there are six publications available in total, four of which were launched in December.

### [Female genital mutilation. RCN guidance for travel health services](#)

The publication [Female Genital Mutilation: An RCN Resource for Nursing and Midwifery Practice \(2016\)](#) provides detailed information on aspects of FGM.

With advances in understanding and updated legislation, there is a need for more specific support for those working in some defined areas of health care practice.



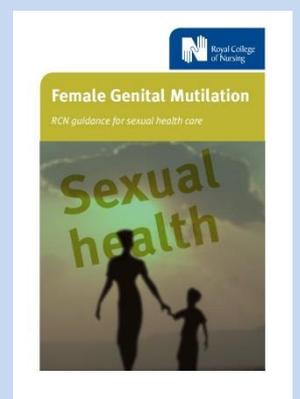
As a result, [this publication](#) acts as a supplement and focuses on those professionals working in travel health services. It highlights how important it is for processes within travel health settings to be reviewed to ensure services provide an effective safeguarding process.

In addition to this guidance a [pathway](#) has been produced which can be used as a quick reference tool and is intended to guide the development of local services when caring for girls and women who may be at risk of, or have been, abused through FGM.

### [Female genital mutilation. RCN guidance for sexual health care publication and pathway](#)

As a result, this publication acts as a supplement and focuses on those professionals working in sexual health services such as sexual health clinics, genitourinary medicine clinics and children's services.

As an addition to this guidance [a pathway](#) has been produced which can be used as a quick reference tool and is intended to guide the development of local services when caring for girls and women who may be at risk of, or have been, abused through FGM.



# RCN Northern Region Events

Find out what's going on across the RCN Northern region

All meetings take place at the RCN Northern region office, Second floor, Avalon House, Sunderland Enterprise Park, Sunderland SR5 3XJ unless otherwise stated. Please email [northern.region@rcn.org.uk](mailto:northern.region@rcn.org.uk) to book your place. For a full list of Northern region events and venue details, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/northern/northern-events](http://www.rcn.org.uk/northern/northern-events).

15 March, 11:15 – 15:00, Sunderland

## [Northern region board meeting open session](#)

All Northern region members are entitled to sit in on the open session of the Northern region board meetings. Lunch is provided so booking is necessary.

23 March, 10:00 – 13:00, Sunderland

## [Multicultural nurses' group meeting](#)

All RCN Northern region members are welcome to attend this meeting.

13 May – 17 May, Liverpool

## [Congress](#)

RCN Congress is a fantastic opportunity for members to meet, learn, develop professionally and share excellent nursing practice. Don't miss out.

6 June 2017, 10:00 – 12:00, Sunderland

## [Northumberland, Tyne and Wear branch meeting](#)

All RCN members who work in the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear branch area are welcome to attend this meeting.

7 June, 9:30 – 11:30, Sunderland

## [County Durham and Darlington branch meeting](#)

All members who work in the County Durham and Darlington branch area are welcome to attend this meeting.

7 June, 2:00 – 16:00, Sunderland

## [Tees Valley branch meeting](#)

All members who work in the Tees Valley area are welcome to attend this meeting.

8 June, 10:00 – 12:00 then 12:30 – 2:30, Newton Rigg College, Penrith, CA11 0AH.

## [Cumbria branch meeting and learning event](#)

All members who work in Cumbria are welcome to attend this meeting, which will be preceded by a workshop in the morning on a topic that will assist your CPD.