



## **RCN Council elections 2019 – Scotland seat**

On Thursday 5 September 2019, RCN Scotland hosted a hustings for the three candidates standing in the election for the Scotland seat to RCN Council.

During the hustings, the candidates gave opening statements before answering questions submitted in advance by members.

Watch a [recording of the hustings](#)

Members watching the hustings on a livestream were also able to submit questions via social media. There was only time to answer one of these submitted questions on the night. The candidates agreed to submit written answers to the questions after the event.

Here, candidate [Margaux Lobban](#) answers the three additional questions.

### **1. How will candidates ensure that the voice of members in Scotland is heard at RCN Council?**

“As part of Council Governance there are strategies which are common to all the involved countries - such as recruitment and retention, and the Safe staffing Bill (law in Scotland) and it is important to make sure equal time is given to issues which are pertinent and common to all of the countries.

“However, as the potential council member for Scotland, I think it would be important be aware of certain issues that Scottish members face, some practical such as geography and the difficulty of staff in remote areas, greater ageing population and also professional member issues such as the shortage of nurses which will have real implications to the safe staffing law.

“Being able to work with local Scottish stewards and council I think is pivotal in ensuring that the current member concerns/issues and indeed achievements are filtered through and can be taken to the table in Council. Tabling motions which are particular to the Scottish RCN member experience will require a strong debating and tactful voice which I believe I have.”

### **2. All three candidates talked about member engagement a lot during the hustings – what will you do to try to improve this? What barriers to member engagement have you encountered previously? What can be learned from that to improve member engagement in the future?**

“The very word engagement is a process of participation, sharing, taking part and being involved - it is, therefore, a dynamic process in other words it works both ways. I think the more important question is why do RCN members feel disengaged?”

“I appreciate there is a study working on that very process at the moment because I think the reasons are many and varied. And I think it is pivotal to the success of the RCN as a union and a professional body to really work with members at improving this two way flow of communication. I think as nurses we can be bombarded with information within our workplace and as part of our professional accountability.

“Member engagement may be ‘uptaken’ for different reasons at different times, such as requiring stewardship assistance in the workplace, or voting for pay and as part of that sharing process, there has to be easy channels for members to be able to participate and be involved.

“It is a little disquieting that on the RCN website the phrase ‘at the top table’ is used, I feel that could set a tone of separation but it is hugely useful that now this ‘top table’ is open to view by members and I think more processes like this will allow members to feel more involved especially if time were set aside for member questions in an online format.”

### **3. The RCN council has a number of priorities within its plan - can you pick one of these and explain why this is important to nursing in Scotland?**

“One of the priorities tabled at the RCN Council meeting in July was the Health and Social Care Strategy ‘It was agreed to set up a task and finish group as a priority to oversee the development of an organisational independent health and social care sector strategy’ (RCN Council minutes July 2019).

“This is particularly relevant in Scotland where the population of older age groups is much higher than younger age groups with the largest increase in the 75 and over age group (Mid-2017 Population estimates Scotland - 2019 NRS). As some of this age group will be reliant on independent and social care uptake there requires to be a clear forward plan which address the recruitment and retention and pay of nurses working in the independent sector as well as the NHS.

“As district and community nurse numbers have dropped in Scotland the RCN needs to work with government and education institutes to promote and encourage people into seeing community and independent sector nursing as a viable career option and also to look at terms and conditions of staff working in what may be perceived as less attractive or supported areas. Scotland’s latest nurse vacancy figures (2018) were 2369 (5.1% of WTE nursing workforce) and the RCN in Scotland must be steadfast in working towards closing this gap.”