



## **Royal College of Nursing Invitation to Tender – Gender, Nursing and Pay**

### **1. Introduction**

Over recent months, the RCN has run a successful campaign to highlight the impact of pay restraint on registered nursing staff in the UK, showing that they – in common with many other NHS staff - have suffered a 14% real terms pay cut since 2010. This is despite a national shortage of nursing staff and a widespread realisation that workload, work pressures and stress are building to intolerable levels. Notwithstanding the effects of austerity on pay and conditions, there is also a widespread belief among the nursing profession that wage levels are not commensurate with levels of skills and responsibility.

There is a broad feeling among nursing staff and their representatives that their treatment is related to a great extent to the high density of women in the nursing workforce, and the belief that they will carry on caring despite their working and economic situation. The RCN wishes to articulate the situation in a cogent and engaging way – how historical, sociological, cultural and political developments have coalesced to shape the workforce and their economic situation. We also want to use this evidence to plot steps that the RCN can take for the future to improve the economic and employment situation of our members – both female and male.

### **2. RCN Employment Relations Department**

The research project is being commissioned by the Employment Relations Department (ERD) which provides the UK strategic lead within the RCN for the pay and conditions of nursing staff, wherever they are employed. The RCN holds the position of Joint Staff Side Secretary of the NHS Staff Council, which gives ERD an influential position in arguing for the protection and extension of terms and conditions in the NHS.

The department gathers intelligence on the nursing labour market, including trends, policies and workforce developments, so that they can effectively assist in negotiations, lobbying and influencing on the employment issues that affect nurses. ERD also has a role in ensuring that health care environments are socially inclusive and that diversity is recognised as a valuable and essential feature of work. Another important area of work is in influencing the policy that affects all aspects of nurses' physical and psychosocial working environment. The department is responsible for supporting an effective representative structure for stewards, safety representatives and learning representatives equitably across the UK, and ERD contributes on trade union issues within Europe and on the employment relations aspects of nursing within the wider nursing professional bodies.

### **3. Research questions and objectives**

The RCN is seeking proposals from researchers with an interest in the area of gender and pay and who will conduct the research working closely with the Employment Relations Department. Research findings will be used to provide evidence to key stakeholders and form the basis of strategic decisions. The RCN would like as much of the project as is realistic to be completed by the end of 2018.

The project has two distinct phases.

The first phase concerns building a robust evidence base around the interplay of gender, nursing, economic and employment experiences. It will consider the extent to which nursing is considered 'women's work' within the broader context of the position of women in the labour market.

The second phase will use this evidence to draw out the implications and potential policy actions for the RCN as a professional trade union, in terms of its political and influencing, negotiating and campaigning activities.

This would allow the RCN to:

- Assess the likely future trajectory of the pay, terms and conditions of nurses
- Make key arguments about the nursing occupation, their pay and position in the UK economy
- Use this rationale to develop a framework for campaigning and negotiation (at national and local levels) to assist the RCN in improving the economic and professional wellbeing of its members

Potential contractors could choose to bid for either or both phases of the work. We would also be interested in partnership approaches between different researchers or institutions who may choose to concentrate on either phase of the work and collaborate on the synthesis of the two phases.

For both phases of the project, the RCN is keen to work in a collaborative way with the contractors, ensuring both that contractors are supported in access to data and to ensure effective communication between the parties.

#### **3.1 Phase One: Building the evidence base**

For the first phase, we are looking for contractors with in-depth experience in labour market economics and knowledge of the health workforce in order to build evidence on how the main historical, sociological, cultural and political forces have impacted on economic and employment experiences of the nursing workforce. The research will be used to draw a compelling picture of the economic and labour market position of the nursing workforce which can be communicated clearly to members and policy makers.

The research may consider the following aspects with regard to the current value of nursing work and how they attenuate or strengthen each other:

- Education policy, healthcare policy and workforce planning
- The goals and actions of social actors and labour market institutions
- The economic context and impact of gender on employment outcomes
- Skill recognition and the location of nursing as a graduate profession in comparison to other professions in terms of economic and employment outcomes
- Cultural and sociological changes in relation to definitions and notions of compassion and care as well as motivational aspects of nursing work
- Diversity within the nursing workforce
- The potential impact of current and future developments such as generational changes in attitudes to work and careers; changes in education policy; and new routes into nursing eg nursing associates.
- The prospective impact of improved pay, conditions and status on nursing supply, retention and staffing levels.

### **3.2 Phase Two: Developing RCN Strategy**

For the second phase of the research, we are looking for contractors to enable us to build on the evidence assembled above and identify areas for strategic development for the RCN. The successful contractor and the RCN would work together to develop a framework for campaigning and negotiation in improving the economic and professional wellbeing of RCN members across the NHS and independent sector. This second stage of the project will entail:

- Framing and identifying how to disseminate the key parts of the research undertaken in stage one in a way that will best enable the RCN to achieve its aims for improved pay and conditions for all RCN members.
- Identifying the key arenas in which the RCN can make best use of evidence and analysis.
- Identifying the key areas which the RCN needs to consider in taking forward its political and influencing, campaigning and negotiating agenda for improved nursing pay in terms of its policies. These might include policies on existing pay structures in the NHS, approaches to collective bargaining in the independent sector or the RCN's internal bargaining structures.

## **4. Research approach and methodology**

Proposals should indicate the suggested overall approach, including:

- approach to gathering and analysis of relevant data and intelligence
- coverage of ethical considerations
- a total fee for the project with a detailed breakdown of costs and day rates of individual researcher
- description of approach to collaboration/co-production with the RCN

## 5. Outputs required

- Interim report and final report with executive summary. These should be written in an accessible style for the target audience – internal RCN staff, RCN members, health and social care employers and policy makers.
- The final report should be engaging and thought provoking, raising challenging views and concepts
- Statistical outputs, tables, raw data (anonymised if necessary)
- Presentation(s) to RCN audience

### Criteria

Overall assessment will be concerned with value for money, taking account of the quality and cost of proposals. Bids will be assessed according to the following criteria and weighting.

A clear and robust methodological approach	25%
Proven experience of producing similar research	20%
Calibre/experience of staff in relation to their role in the project	15%
Understanding of key contextual issues/relevant background	15%
Value for money	15%
Ability to write clearly for a range of audiences	10%

## 6. Tender Requirements

In addition to the requirements set out above, we would like details of:

- **The organisation** with details of the systems and practices in place to ensure compliance with GDPR.
- **The Research Team** with details on who will be working on each stage of the project, in what role, how much of their time has been allocated to the task and whether this will entail supervision of other members of staff. This should also include details about the experience of team members in respect of methodological and statistical approaches proposed.
- **References:** Names, addresses and telephone numbers of two previous clients of the provision of similar services.
- **Timing, Project Management and Communication:** Project timetable to include the key stages of the project, who will be working on each stage and duration of each stage, including any assumptions. It should incorporate deadlines, key decisions and what you will need from the RCN and when.

This should also include evidence of the project leader's approach to project and risk management

## **7. Timetable**

Proposals to be sent by **14 May** to:

Rachael McIlroy  
Senior Research Lead  
Employment Relations Department  
Royal College of Nursing  
[Rachael.mcilroy@rcn.org.uk](mailto:Rachael.mcilroy@rcn.org.uk)  
0207 647 3566