



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

New help for nurses struggling financially

As nurses, midwives, healthcare assistants and student nurses continue to struggle financially under the Government's current economic austerity measures, the RCN Foundation is publicising an initiative to help those in the nursing community who need financial support and advice.



Glenn Turp, regional director for the RCN Northern region, said:

"Through our LampLight support service, our advisers are providing advice on eligibility for benefits and tax credits. We can also provide hardship grants to those most in desperate need, as well as guidance on income maximisation. We also provide onward referrals to appropriate agencies for further support.



"The RCN Northern region understands that every nurse, midwife, healthcare support worker and student's situation is different. That is why we tailor our support to the needs of the individual.



"Under the Coalition and Conservative governments, nurses have had a real-terms pay cut of 14 per cent. Sadly, this means that our services are more in demand than ever. The Government is pressing on with further cuts to nursing bursaries and has made a frankly risible pay offer for the next financial year. If you are part of the nursing team and need to speak to someone in confidence about what emergency financial help we can offer you, please call us on 0345 772 6200 from 830am to 830pm, Monday to Friday, and we will see what help we can offer you."

Centenary celebrations of nursing excellence and innovation – RCN conference, Newcastle

Save the date! On 6 July we will be celebrating a hundred years of the RCN with a free conference open to all members based in the Northern and Yorkshire and the Humber regions.

More information is available on the [event webpage](#) and booking is now open.

Hartlepool fertility unit closure halted by high court

The RCN Northern region has criticised North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust for continuing to undertake one-to-one redundancy meetings with staff at the University Hospital of Hartlepool fertility unit, despite being ordered by the high court to halt the closure of the service.



Greg Canning, the RCN's senior officer for Hartlepool said: "By continuing to undertake one-to-one meetings between management and staff at the hospital, the trust is destabilising the unit. Staff will understandably feel that the trust management are going to try to close this unit regardless of the court order, and will start looking for jobs elsewhere. So the issue of understaffing will become a self-fulfilling prophesy."

"We believe the trust could have recruited a new embryologist if they had made a proper effort, but now the whole team is being undermined by pursuing one-to-one meetings," continued Greg. "We've seen no financial evidence to support the reasons for this closure, and it's a high quality service that should be enhanced, not cut. For the broader NHS, it's death by a thousand cuts."

Hartlepool Borough Council sought an injunction to stop the closure at the end of March 2016 following a meeting of the Council's Audit & Governance Committee on 26 February. Trust representatives failed to attend a Joint Health Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 15 March, making it the third time they have declined to answer to the public on the decision.

100 top tips for health care support workers

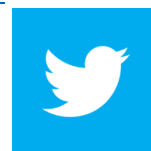


As a special project for our centenary year, we are compiling a booklet of 100 top tips by health care support workers (HCSWs) for HCSWs. We're asking RCN members who work as health care assistants or assistant practitioners to submit any tips that their colleagues might find helpful, such as how they deliver excellent patient care, how they relax after a busy work day, or how they build great relationships with patients and colleagues.

The RCN Health Practitioners' Committee will produce a shortlist from the submissions and the final 100 top tips will be selected at a Congress fringe event in June this year. We'll put these into a mini-guide, which will be sent out with the autumn copy of *Health + Care*, the RCN's magazine for health care support workers. Submit your top tip here: <http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/100tipsforhcas>

Or for more information you can visit: www.rcn.org.uk/centenary/projects/100-top-tips

We are planning to hold a Twitter chat to on the topic from 6-7pm on Tuesday 12 April. Join in online at www.twitter.com/theRCN



CAR INSURANCE FOR RCN MEMBERS **0800 756 8131** www.rcn.org.uk/insurance HOME INSURANCE FOR RCN MEMBERS **0800 756 8131**

For TextDirect: first dial 18001. Calls may be recorded. 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.

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Smooth move by Darlington nurse shortlisted for RCNi award

RCN member Diane Hindson has designed a groundbreaking new slide sheet, the ReDi Slide, to assist clinical staff in moving patients who are unable to move themselves.

Part of the back care advisory team at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, Diane (pictured on the far right) recognised that existing slide sheets were far from ideal for patients or staff, so set about finding a solution.

Diane said: "Slide sheets are an essential piece of equipment used by nurses to reduce the risk of injury to patients when they are being moved, in particular from skin damage caused by friction.

Patients include those who have just had surgery or suffered a stroke may not be mobile and we also use them to gently move patients nearing the end of their life, whilst maintaining their comfort and dignity."



"There are a range of slide sheets available, which can be confusing for staff trying to decide which to use," Diane continued. "I wanted to create a one-size fits all solution to reduce the risk of injury to patients and those moving them, and thought long and hard about the ideal design. Slide sheets are made from nylon with a special coating to reduce friction and make moving patients easy and safe. My final design is essentially two slide sheets stitched together, leaving splits, making a large partial tube shape which covers the whole bed or trolley area."

"I worried that it was too simple, but when we tried it out on our wards the feedback was excellent. Staff felt the ReDi Slide protected patients very well, whether they were being transferred between bed and trolley or being repositioned in bed. Staff also felt less at risk of injury themselves, which is so important because musculoskeletal injuries are the main cause of sickness absence in the NHS. Following feedback we added pictorial labels indicating the 'head' and 'feet' ends, as well as a small loop of fabric, so the ReDi Slide can be hung up when not in use."

Trust director of nursing Noel Scanlon (pictured in the middle of the photo above) said: "This marvellous innovation will enable patients to be moved with much less discomfort to them and a much reduced risk of injury to nursing and other care staff. We are very grateful to Diane and her colleagues who have developed the ReDi slide and go the extra mile for their patients."

The ReDi Slide has been shortlisted for a prestigious Royal College of Nursing RCNi award and will find out if she's a winner on 6 May at the 2016 RCNi awards ceremony in London.

Government defeated on damaging Trade Union bill – for now

The House of Lords has voted with a significant majority of 248 to 160 to amend the Trade Union Bill, removing a controversial clause which would allow a cap on unions' facility time.

The amendment was tabled by local politician and peer Lord Beecham, former leader of Newcastle City Council.

Glenn Turp, Northern regional director, said: "The Government claims that limits on facility time will save public sector money, but the reality is that they will have the opposite effect."

Government attempts to limit facility time, which enables representatives to carry out their trade union roles, would increase staff turnover and harm productivity. The RCN has been calling for the removal of clause 13 since the bill was introduced last August.

Evidence from RCN representatives shows that those who get sufficient facility time are able to influence important issues such as staffing levels, the management of bank and agency nurses, and staff sickness and stress.



This link between facility time, efficiency, and patient safety was made powerfully in the Lords' debate by crossbench peer Baroness Watkins of Tavistock. A former nurse who is now vice chancellor and emeritus professor of health care leadership at Plymouth University, Mary Watkins was made a crossbench peer in October 2015.

Janet Davies, Chief Executive & General Secretary of the RCN said: "This vote was a victory for common sense and a victory for patient care."

The bill has to complete its remaining stages in the Lords after Easter, before heading back to the Commons, where the amendment could be overturned by the Government.

Independent research last year revealed that staff turnover in organisations without union representatives is three times higher than in those with union representatives, equating to an annual saving in the NHS of at least £100 million.

The Mary Seacole awards are now open for 2016/17.

A fantastic opportunity has arisen for rising stars to access funding and development support. The Mary Seacole Awards provide an opportunity for individuals to be recognised for their outstanding work in black and ethnic minority (BME) communities. The Mary Seacole Leadership Awards of up to £12,500 each provide the opportunity to enhance effective leadership and communication skills. Alternatively, the Mary Seacole Development Awards of up to £6,250 each provide the opportunity to develop leadership skills.

Two pre-application workshops for interested individuals are planned, and a member of the steering group would also happily speak to interested individuals.

Further information is available here: www.nhsemployers.org/maryseacole

How do you feel about what's happening in the NHS?

NHS England is asking nurses to help them understand their communication preferences for staying informed about changes to the health service.

It has commissioned a survey looking at nurses' and midwives' communication needs. Communicating with the many thousands of nursing and midwifery professionals that work in the numerous settings presents a unique challenge for the NHS – how to cut through busy schedules and compete against other demands?

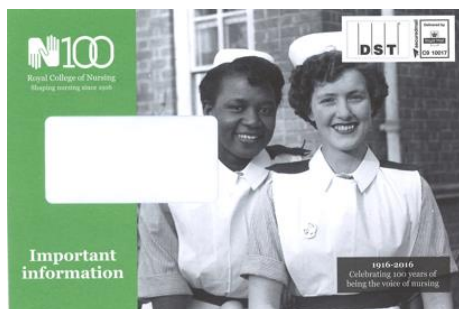


This research, being carried out by independent research agency Ipsos MORI, seeks to understand how NHS England can communicate with you effectively so you are aware of and prepared for important changes and policy developments? This project looks to deliver an up-to date picture of what nurses' and midwives' needs and preferences are in relation to communications about changes to NHS central policy.

NHS England will not have access to individual survey responses. Only those who 'opt in' will be contacted by Ipsos MORI, and they will only receive communications related to this research.

The online survey opened on 16 March and closes on 11 April. It aims to gather the views of as many nurses and midwives as possible. The survey can be accessed here: <http://bit.ly/1VGyAKE>

Look out for this envelope – it contains a year's free membership!



To celebrate our centenary, the RCN is giving away 100 free memberships to randomly selected members throughout 2016.

Be sure to check your mail carefully as there is a time limit within which you can claim your prize.

For more information on this and other centenary initiatives you can visit www.rcn.org.uk/centenary

New RCN publication

Genital examination in women. A resource for skills development and assessment (web only)

The continuing development and extension of nursing roles benefits both nurses and their client groups. The ability to carry out genital and bimanual examinations is now a key requirement for many nurses working in primary, secondary and community care settings. The purpose of this document is to provide standards and sample assessment tools for training in genital examination in women for registered nurses working in sexual and reproductive health settings, and related health and social care settings. It assumes an extensive knowledge of relevant anatomy, physiology and pathology. The publication is available via www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Once a nurse, always a nurse

Do you know anyone whose registration that is no longer live? Now is the time to return to nursing, according to Health Education England, which is making it easier than ever for previously registered nurses in the north east to return to a career they once loved.

Northumbria University and Teesside University are both offering return to nursing programmes, with full funding provided by the NHS. All returners receive full support during their academic and practical learning. For nurses with lapsed NMC registrations who are undecided about returning to nursing, here are some stories from nurses in the north east who came back to the profession they never stopped loving.

Nicky's story: a community nurse at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

I began my training as a state registered nurse in 1979 based at Freeman Hospital in Newcastle and after qualifying in 1982, worked as a staff nurse on a general surgical ward. Following completion of my district nurse training course in 1985, I worked at a practice in Gosforth before leaving to start a family in 1987. I briefly returned for a year in 1991 working on the twilight for a practice in Ponteland but then made the conscious decision to leave and bring up my three children. I always wanted to return to nursing at some stage and after a break of over twenty years I successfully completed the NHS's return to practice course at Teesside University.

"For someone who had been out of nursing for such a long time, I did find the course fairly intense but with plenty of support and encouragement along the way, I was successful in returning to a career I love."

During the course I was encouraged by my tutor to regain experience in my preferred area of nursing to help me progress. So via local connections I arranged to shadow one of the district nursing sisters in my locality. I worked for eight months as a bank staff nurse in the community for Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and am now working in a similar position for my local trust.

"I did find the course fairly intense but with plenty of support and encouragement along the way, I was successful in returning to a career I love."

I would recommend the return to practice course to anyone who wants to get back into nursing. I wouldn't be in the position I am now if I hadn't completed it. If I were to offer one piece of advice it would be that although it takes a lot of commitment, if you have the drive and are surrounded by support as I was, then you can do it

Fiona's story: a nurse at City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

I started my journey to become a nurse back in 1982 - the profession I had always aspired to be a part of. With particular interest in rehabilitation nursing I directed my studies and my career path in that area and developed a real passion for it.



A few years into my career my personal circumstances changed and I was forced to give up nursing. When the children grew older and were settled at school, I looked for opportunities in the healthcare sector as this is where I felt most at home.

I was lucky enough to secure a job as an occupational health assistant which I really enjoyed and it suited my family life; but after a while I needed a new challenge. I moved to the north east and applied for a role as a physiotherapy technical instructor on the Hume Unit and was successful. This was a revelation to me – I loved every minute of it.

I realised that the ward was my natural environment, I felt comfortable and confident there. A colleague suggested that I should do my return to nursing practice at Northumbria University and I jumped at the chance.

The application process for the course was very straightforward. I was nervous when I was selected for interview but everything went smoothly.

I was by far the eldest on the course and I felt as though I was starting my training all over again, but once I got back into the swing of things, it was all very interesting and stimulating.

“I realised that the ward was my natural environment, I felt comfortable and confident there”

Interested – or know someone who might be?

To read more information and to hear more inspirational stories by people who have returned to nursing you can visit comeback.hee.nhs.uk

If you would like to discuss your return to practice needs contact:

Teesside University - Dr Pat Bramble: pat.bramble@tees.ac.uk or on 01642 342566.

Northumbria University - Maggie Coates: maggie.coates@northumbria.ac.uk or 0191 215 6239

Health Education England - Joy McGurk for general enquiries: joy.mcgurk@ne.hee.nhs.uk or 0191 275 4668

Northern Region Events

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

For Northern region events, visit <https://www.rcn.org.uk/events> and filter the results by region using the box on the right-hand side of the page.

11 April – [Retired Nurses' Group meeting](#)

1.00pm – 4.00pm, Board room, RCN Northern region office, Avalon House, St Catherine's Court, Sunderland Enterprise Park, SR5 3XJ. Email northern.region@rcn.org.uk to book your place.

If you are a retired RCN member, why not come along? The group's chair Cate Woolley-Brown says: "When you retire, it doesn't have to mean the end of your involvement with nursing. I started the Northern region's retired nurses' group in 2009 and membership of the group is growing very steadily. We focus on nursing issues and get a lot done. We talk about anything that's current in the nursing world, local issues and issues that affect us as retired nurses... We're a very lively and active group and people can benefit from coming to know what's going on in their local area. Our regional director and the RCN officers are very supportive of the group, and it's good to still feel part of nursing, we're not forgotten and we're out there and an important part of the Royal College of Nursing."

14 April – [RCN Older People's Forum and British Geriatrics Society Joint Conference – Multidisciplinary Working in Team Settings](#). Birmingham, 9.30 am – 4.30 pm.

Find out more and book your place via our [website](#).

19 April – [The role of the rep – 'legal eagles': are you up to date on the legal aspects that affect your role?](#) 10.00 am – 4.00 pm, Foundry Main Room, Castlegate, Melbourne Street, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 2QJ.

This continuous learning and development workshop will provide RCN representatives from the Northern, North West and Yorkshire and Humber regions with a chance to get updated about the legal aspects of safeguarding, whistleblowing and duty of candour, in order to be able to effectively represent and signpost RCN members. Apply online or email mandy.clark@rcn.org.uk

1 June – [Open session of the Northern regional board meeting](#), 12.00pm – 2.00pm, Board room, RCN Northern region office, Avalon House, St Catherine's Court, Sunderland Enterprise Park, SR5 3XJ. All members are welcome. Lunch is included. Book your place via northern.region@rcn.org.uk

23 June - [Multicultural nurses group](#) - RCN Northern region office, Avalon House, St Catherine's Court, Sunderland Enterprise Park, SR5 3XJ. Email northern.region@rcn.org.uk to book your place.

6 July – [Centenary celebrations of nursing excellence and innovation](#), 9.30am - 4.00 pm. The County Hotel, Neville Street, Newcastle NE1 5DF. The RCN Northern region is teaming up with the RCN Yorkshire and the Humber region to mark the RCN's centenary with a conference to remember.

Come along to help us celebrate. **The conference is free to RCN members, and you can join when you book.** Book your free place [online](#) or call 02920 54 64 60 and quote event number 2067.