

## **Royal College of Nursing response to the Global Health Workforce Alliance consultation on Global inter-sectoral and multi-constituency HRH collaboration**

### **Introduction**

With a membership of around 430,000 registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nurse cadets, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world. RCN members work in a variety of hospital and community settings in the NHS and the independent sector. The RCN promotes patient and nursing interests on a wide range of issues by working closely with the Government, the UK parliaments and other national, European and international institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations.

### **Background**

The RCN was pleased to be able to input into the formulation of the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) global strategy on human resources for health in 2015.<sup>1</sup> In our response to this, the RCN made a robust, evidenced case that the global nursing workforce needed stronger attention, and that the development and involvement of robust professional associations/trade unions - such as the RCN - had a vital role to play in delivering this strategy.

We are very pleased that the follow-up draft strategy, which is due to go before the WHO's Executive Board, contains a much stronger focus on the need for a larger, better educated nursing workforce. We also welcome the strategy's recognition that professional associations and/or trade unions will play a vital role in supporting and driving this plan.<sup>2</sup>

### **General Comments**

This latest consultation from the Global Health Workforce Alliance (GHWA) – the body which supports WHO in areas related to human resources – sets a positive precedent for setting out how the global strategy is to be delivered once GHWA's mandate for operation expires in 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> RCN, 'Response to Global strategy on human resources for health: Workforce 2030, available at: [https://www2.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/639166/43.15-Global-Strategy-on-Human-Resources-for-Health.pdf](https://www2.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/639166/43.15-Global-Strategy-on-Human-Resources-for-Health.pdf) (2015)

<sup>2</sup> WHO, 'Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030', available at: <http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/globstrathrh-2030/en/> (2016)

Our understanding from this document is that GHWA has called upon the WHO to support the establishment of a global mechanism for monitoring and supporting this strategy. This mechanism aims to:

- maintain high-level political commitment to the global strategy
- facilitate the alignment of global health initiatives to the HRH investment priorities outlined in this strategy
- promote public–private collaboration and inter-sectoral and multilateral policy dialogue, and
- foster global coordination and mutual accountability.

The mechanism will be closely linked with the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework and with emerging global governance arrangements for achieving universal health coverage, including access to health workers.

The network will have a “hub and spoke” structure with a core hub embedded in the WHO Secretariat and comprising staff of the WHO health workforce department, which will liaise with WHO regional and country offices as appropriate.

## **Responses to specific questions**

### **Question 1. Please provide overall comments on the HRH network plan (150 word maximum)**

The RCN warmly welcomes GHWA's proposed design for a network of four strategic hubs – one for each of the global strategy's objectives (listed in our response to question 2 below).

We affirm that the role of this network should be (according to our understanding) to maintain high-level political commitment to the global strategy, facilitate the alignment of global health initiatives to the HRH investment priorities outlined in this strategy, promote public–private collaboration and inter-sectoral and multilateral policy dialogue, and foster global coordination and mutual accountability.

The RCN would welcome further discussion with the WHO on what our contribution and participation in this process could be going forward.

### **Question 2. Recommend at least 2 (up to a maximum of 4) priority areas of work for the network that are within the boundaries of the 4 strategic objectives of the Global Strategy on Human Resources for health and the 2 objectives of the Network**

The RCN is already undertaking a number of work streams relevant to each of the four strategic objectives included in the global strategy for human resources for health, as well as the two network objectives.

We have listed these below, and would recommend that GHWA consider recognising these as part of any RCN contribution to the HRH network.

**Strategic objective 1: To optimise performance, quality and impact of the health workforce through evidence-informed policies on human resources for health, contributing to healthy lives and well-being, effective universal health coverage, resilience and health security at all levels**

The RCN designs and lobbies for health policies that advance a productive, efficient health system, that prioritises patient needs, and which ensures that the staff who work in the health system have the resources and support they need to deliver good care outcomes. This work occurs at several levels: country/local level (within the four UK countries), UK level and the European (EU) level. Below are a few examples of the work which the RCN does in this area:

- **The RCN supports reviews of key areas, such as nurse education:** Following the recommendations of the Francis Inquiry into care failings at a Mid-Staffordshire hospital between 2007 and 2010, the RCN hosted a UK-wide commission (the Willis Commission) which looked at what the form and content of education and preparation should be in order to produce a nursing workforce that is fit for future health and social care services.<sup>3</sup>
- **The RCN develops and champions health policies which acknowledge the rapidly changing needs of patients:** In the UK, as well as many other developed countries, this has focused on the reorientation of care towards the community level. In order to better inform its policy positions, the RCN has undertaken and published international comparative research which analyses a number of national models where this shift has happened.<sup>4</sup>
- **The RCN supports, and leads on the development of evidenced-based clinical guidelines:** Some of these are developed by our own internal experts to

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<sup>3</sup> Willis Commission, 'Key recommendations', available at: [http://www.williscommission.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/485009/Willis\\_Commission\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](http://www.williscommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/485009/Willis_Commission_executive_summary.pdf) (2012)

<sup>4</sup> RCN, 'Moving Care to the Community: An International Perspective', [http://www.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/523068/12.13\\_Moving\\_care\\_to\\_the\\_community\\_an\\_international\\_perspective.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/523068/12.13_Moving_care_to_the_community_an_international_perspective.pdf) (May 2013)

support our members, and others are the result of joint working with relevant national bodies, such as the National Institute of Care Excellence (NICE).<sup>5</sup>

- **The RCN provides advice, guidance and lobbying for safe staffing levels:** This has involved learning from experience overseas, working with various NHS initiatives and developing guidance on what best practice looks like across care settings.<sup>6</sup>
- **The RCN works on improving the day-to-day working environment for nurses and patients:** The RCN employs and trains safety and learning representatives who work with employers to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for RCN members, as well as advising on opportunities for career development and further education.<sup>7</sup>

**Strategic objective 2: To align investment in human resources for health with the current and future needs of the population taking account of labour market dynamics, to enable maximum improvements in health outcomes, employment creation and economic growth**

The RCN is a proactive advocate for better alignment of policies which affect the recruitment, education and retention of the entire nursing workforce. Below are a few examples of the work which the RCN does in this area:

- **The RCN lobbies the UK Government to recognise investment in human resources for health as pro-growth and pro-job creation:** For the last several years the RCN has fed into the Government's comprehensive spending reviews. In these, the RCN has provided evidence for greater investment in the UK health workforce as an enabler for growth and fiscal responsibility.
- **The RCN is active in compiling objective data and analysing this to identify short, medium and long term challenges and opportunities for improving care outcomes:** RCN policy positions recognise the joined-up nature of the challenges facing the sustainability of the nursing profession, as well as the wider health workforce. Key challenges such as: poor skills mix, an ageing workforce, safe staffing levels and sufficient staff numbers for example all impact on one another.

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<sup>5</sup> RCN, 'Clinical guidelines', available at: <https://www2.rcn.org.uk/development/practice/clinicalguidelines> (2016)

<sup>6</sup> RCN, 'Guidance on safe staffing levels,' available at: [https://www2.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/353237/003860.pdf](https://www2.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/353237/003860.pdf) (2010)

<sup>7</sup> RCN, 'The role of RCN safety reps', available at: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved/rcn-reps/the-role-of-rcn-safety-reps> (2016)

District/community and learning disabilities nursing are two recent examples where the RCN has flagged that the need for sustainable incentives packages and sense-led workforce planning as being key necessities for the delivery of good patient services.<sup>8</sup>

- **The RCN is actively lobbying the UK Government to recognise that the UK nursing workforce is in shortage and to address this through more investment in education:** Since 2014, the RCN has advised the Government to put in place a long-term workforce plan to meet a systemic nursing shortage. We have argued that part of this (for the immediate term) should involve placing nursing on a special list of shortage occupations which are exempted from standard immigration rules, known as the Shortage Occupations List (SOL).<sup>9</sup>
- **In addition to more student placements, the RCN lobbies for greater resources in advanced practice and specialist nursing skills:** Through its Frontline First series of reports for example, the RCN has raised concerns that efficiency savings in the NHS have led to a large reduction in the number of senior, well-educated nurses and those with clinical skills-sets relevant to specific patient groups, such as children with learning disabilities.<sup>10</sup>

**Strategic objective 3: To build the capacity of institutions at sub-national, national and international levels for effective leadership and governance of actions on human resources for health (HRH)**

Part of the RCN's organisational strategy is to support nursing on a global level. This involves working with our international sister associations to build up their own leadership and influencing capacity, as well as supporting current and future nurse leaders in the UK.

- **In 2014, the RCN initiated a two-year capacity-building partnership with the Zambia Union of Nurses Organisation (ZUNO):** The aim is for both organisations to share best practice and strengthen the voice of nursing associations. This partnership is our first institutional capacity-building project with another national nursing professional association and trade union. We are

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<sup>8</sup> RCN, 'District Nursing – Harnessing the Potential', [http://www.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/521198/004366\\_District\\_nursing\\_harnessing\\_the\\_potential.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/521198/004366_District_nursing_harnessing_the_potential.pdf) (April 2013)

<sup>9</sup> RCN, 'Response to the Migration Advisory Committee', available at: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/royal...of...responses/.../conr-6915.pdf> (2015)

<sup>10</sup> RCN, Frontline First, [http://www.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/564739/004598.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/564739/004598.pdf) (March 2014)

pleased to be able share our experiences as a professional association with ZUNO.

- **The RCN also offers a UK Clinical Leadership Programme which develops individual clinical leadership skills:** This programme develops leadership skills through participating in action learning sets and leading a service improvement project, managing the process of change in the clinical environment impacting on patient safety, practice, compassion or care and experience coaching as a supportive personal development tool and use coaching skills in practice.<sup>11</sup>
- **The RCN also facilitates and supports existing nurse leaders from across the UK to share experiences and make their views heard:** The RCN's Executive Nurse Network (ENN) provides a supportive and safe environment for current nurse leaders to share and develop ideas or solutions, along with the ability for members to widen their professional networks across the UK and across employment sectors.<sup>12</sup>

**Strategic objective 4: To strengthen data on human resources for health, for monitoring of and ensuring accountability for the implementation of both national strategies and the Global Strategy.**

The RCN has a strong capability in data collection, analysis and using this to inform our priorities and hold policy-makers to account for their decisions. Below are a few examples of the work which the RCN does in this area:

- **The RCN supports and monitors standards around ethical international recruitment:** This includes supporting the WHO's principle that at least 25 per cent of new UK government development funding for health is directed to support human resources for health (the 50:50 principle), as well as the Department of Health's ethical recruitment code in the UK (2001, revised in 2004), the Code of Practice for the international recruitment of healthcare professionals in Scotland (2006), the Code of Practice for the Commonwealth (2003) and most recently the World Health Organisation's 2010 global code.<sup>13</sup>
- **The RCN collects evidence looking at the state of the nursing workforce in the UK:** The RCN compiles an annual report, called the Labour Market Review.

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<sup>11</sup> RCN, 'Clinical Leadership Programme', available at: <https://www2.rcn.org.uk/development/rcn-clinical-leadership-programme> (2016)

<sup>12</sup> RCN, 'Executive Nurse Network', available at: <http://rcnenn.org.uk/> (2016)

<sup>13</sup> RCN, 'RCN position statement on international recruitment', available at: [https://www2.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/629530/International-Recruitment-2015.pdf](https://www2.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/629530/International-Recruitment-2015.pdf) (2015)

This provides a snapshot of the UK nursing labour market, looking at recent data and trends for nursing staff working in the health sector across the UK, drawing out differences and similarities. The review uses national data sets to estimate the size, shape and composition of the nursing workforce.<sup>14</sup> The review covers:

- the UK nursing workforce across the whole UK economy
  - the nursing workforce in NHS England, Scotland Wales and in health and social care
  - nursing earnings
  - pre-registration education
- **The RCN also conducts an annual employment survey which samples the views of the RCN’s membership and provides an opportunity for them to tell us what matters to them:** We then use the results of this important survey to set out what the government must do to improve conditions for them and better support nurses in delivering the best possible patient care.<sup>15</sup>

The RCN has conducted this survey since the 1980s and a key feature has been the inclusion of many of the same questions over time, in order to measure changes and trends. The survey follows seven key areas (see below), all of which are critically important to informing what needs to be done in order to bolster recruitment and retention of the workforce:

- employment status and personal profile
  - pay, grading and unsocial hours payments
  - pension arrangements
  - training
  - working hours
  - workload and staffing
  - views regarding nursing as a career.
- **The RCN also monitors and analyses international evidence which has implications for the UK profession – including international shortages and trends in migration:** In 2015, we produced a holistic report for our annual congress which showed our members that the international context in which the UK recruits overseas nurses has, and will continue to change.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> RCN, ‘2015 Labour Market Review’, available at: [https://www2.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/649922/RCN\\_Labour\\_Market\\_2015.pdf](https://www2.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/649922/RCN_Labour_Market_2015.pdf) (2015)

<sup>15</sup> RCN, ‘Employment Survey 2015’, available at: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-005350> (2016)

<sup>16</sup> RCN, ‘International Recruitment 2015’, available at: [https://www2.rcn.org.uk/support/policy/policy\\_briefings/2015-briefings](https://www2.rcn.org.uk/support/policy/policy_briefings/2015-briefings) (2015)

## Network objectives

**Network objective 1: To inform high-level political engagement and intersectoral and multilateral policy dialogue in support of the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on HRH. This may include, for example, providing a forum for multi-sector and multi stakeholder agenda setting, sharing of best practices, and harmonization and alignment of international support to HRH**

- The RCN has excellent stakeholder relationships across the health and social sectors, as well as with government. We frequently host open discussions, seminars and member events to bring together the views of key stakeholders, facilitate discussion and disseminate best practice.

**Network objective 2: To foster global monitoring and mutual accountability on international HRH goals, targets and commitments, effectively linked with United Nations system processes and mechanisms for monitoring of UHC and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and operating in close coherence with existing multilateral human rights frameworks and institutions**

- The RCN has consistently lobbied for better collection, analysis and sharing of empirical data. We believe that this is vital for informing policy, monitoring and measuring success, and can support policy-makers, patients and health workforce staff to make a health service that is responsive to change. As has been set out earlier in this response, the RCN is already proactive in collecting and monitoring data and we would be happy to support the WHO (where possible) in using this to reflect on how the UK is meeting the global strategy going forward.

**Question 3. Describe concretely what you/your organisation can commit towards in order to take forward the work of the network in the next 2 years (2016-2018)?**

The RCN is able to commit the following:

- Our organisational expertise in articulating the critical contribution of nursing in delivering this strategy
- A venue for hosting discussions with other network members, and channels for disseminating outcomes and intelligence from these to WHO
- Monitoring and feeding back the impact of UK Government policy decisions on the global strategy in the UK



- Sharing insights and intelligence as well as future RCN publications, such as the Labour Market Review and Employment Survey results. These utilise robust data to monitor key trends within the nursing workforce in the UK, as well as major international points of interest, such as inward migration of nurses

**Question 4. In your opinion what satellite hubs should the network have, and working on which activities? AND Would you/your organisation be ready to facilitate / coordinate such a hub, or only contribute to its activities?**

The RCN agrees with the suggested approach of four satellite hubs dedicated to supporting each of the four strategic objectives of the strategy. We believe that each hub should report to the main WHO hub on examples of good and bad practice relevant to the thematic focus of each objective, and consider the consequences of national policy decisions on delivering this strategy.

The RCN is very keen to explore this further with WHO and relevant partners. We would welcome further discussions to identify and scope specific work streams and to share expertise.

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