RCN Representatives’ statement of expectations

"Your help makes a massive difference"
The purpose of the RCN’s Representatives’ statement of expectations is to outline our commitment to you once you are elected and accredited as an RCN representative.

It will support you in the development of your role and practice as a representative. It is for both experienced RCN representatives and those who are newly accredited.
We recognise the crucial work that you do on behalf of the RCN and our members and want to ensure that you are appropriately supported to fulfil your role effectively.

We also want to ensure that you are not subject to any discriminatory practices as a result of your work on our behalf.

The RCN has an obligation to ensure that RCN members receive the required standards of representation in the workplace from competent and confident representatives. This statement sets out what the RCN will do to support you in your role and the expectations the RCN has of you in terms of your activity and engagement to fulfil your trade union duties and to maintain professional standards in the workplace.

For those of you who are newly accredited as a representative you will attend the mandatory learning and development (L&D) pathway and will also sign up to a learning contract. The learning contract will apply whilst you are undertaking the pathway (Module 1 and Module 2) and is an integral part of the RCN Representatives’ statement of expectations. When you have completed Module 2 the learning contract is terminated but the RCN Representatives’ statement of expectations will continue to apply.

The RCN Representatives’ statement of expectations reflects the RCN Dignity charter for members¹.

¹ RCN Dignity charter for members, RCN Publications, RCN Online www.rcn.org.uk, publication code 003 587
Our commitment to you, the RCN will:

Empower you to make appropriate decisions in line with your responsibilities by:

- providing you with e-Activate, a monthly newsletter containing news and information specifically for representatives, and a monthly on-line resource, *The Tools of the Trade*², to give you up-to-date employment-based information you need to make appropriate decisions in the workplace

- providing you with access to the RCN e-library and online information and learning resources to support both your own and members’ continuing professional development (CPD) requirements via the RCN’s activist and Learning Zone web pages

- providing you with an RCN activists’ diary and a free subscription to Nursing Standard

- providing you with information/advice, prompt support from your country/regional team and regular e-briefings on national employment/legal issues.

Support you with appropriate learning and development by:

- inviting you to attend an externally recognised, high-quality, standardised learning and development pathway within three months of your accreditation

- providing you with a learning contract which outlines our commitment to you in terms of how you will be treated and supported throughout your learning journey with us

- offering you a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) on skills and knowledge based topics. The programme is mapped to RCN practice standards for RCN representatives that are responsive to the current issues facing trade union representatives in the workplace

- inviting you to annual employment conferences giving you access to a national network of trade union representatives within the largest national nursing organisation and access to national experts on employment issues

- offering you the opportunity to understand roles within the RCN’s governance structure through shadowing RCN board members, RCN council members and UK committee members as appropriate to your personal development plan and as agreed with your mentor

- if appropriate, support you to map your skills as an RCN representative to the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework

- provide you with a named RCN mentor who will:
  - discuss with you the mutual expectations of being an RCN representative and support you to access continuing professional development (CPD) with the RCN in line with your personal development plan
  - enable you to access appropriate supervision while you develop your skills in line with the RCN practice standards
  - offer you a minimum of six hours of mentorship over a 12-month period.

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3 The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (NHS KSF) and the Development Review Process (October 2004), product no 40440
Our commitment to you, the RCN will:

Support you in your role by:

- covering all associated expenses with your learning and development, in accordance with the RCN expenses policy in a timely manner
- supporting you to submit a business case to your country/regional office or your employer for the resources you need to undertake your role effectively if appropriate.

Clearly define your role and responsibilities by:

- providing you with clarity on what you will be doing within your role as an RCN representative through an RCN role descriptor
- providing you with an RCN handbook specific to your role.

...providing you with clarity about your role and responsibilities
Enable you to carry out your role in an environment that is safe and supportive by:

- offering you the opportunity to join RCN campaigns at local and national levels for safer working practices and quality health services
- offering you a range of resources that keep you up-to-date on matters relating to diversity, equality and human rights within the health and social care sector
- supporting you to create and protect working environments that are fully inclusive and free from unlawful discrimination, bullying and harassment
- offering you support from your local RCN office to ensure you are not discriminated against as you perform your duties as an RCN representative
- exploring your capacity for undertaking work on behalf of the RCN, including casework, prior to allocating cases/work to you.

Offer you the opportunity to influence and contribute to the direction and development of the RCN, we will:

- communicate to you any changes that will have an impact on your role as an RCN representative.

...protect working environments that are fully inclusive and free from unlawful discrimination, bullying and harassment
Your commitment to us, you will:

Be accountable, take responsibility for your actions and meet the obligations of your role, including developing required skills and knowledge. You will:

- fulfil your role in line with the RCN’s role descriptor and identify to your mentor if you are unable to fulfil your responsibilities due to other commitments
- commit to the development of your knowledge and skills as appropriate to your role
- engage fully with your RCN branch and the wider branch membership and regularly attend branch meetings
- work with your mentor to take advantage of the RCN’s mentorship programme, accessing at least six hours of mentorship per year and work with your mentor to continue to develop in your role
- with the support of your local RCN office, work to meeting the needs of RCN members in the workplace through ensuring an appropriate standard of representation, influencing, negotiating, campaigning, communicating and organising
- engage and consult with RCN members in your workplace as appropriate
- seek advice from your RCN mentor before committing to more than one representative role
- ensure your RCN membership is current at all times.

...always act in accordance with your level of competence and the parameters of your role
Be loyal and act in the best interest of the RCN, support corporate decisions and directions publicly and respect and abide by organisational procedures. You will:

- always act in accordance with your level of competence and the parameters of your role. Seek advice and support from your RCN mentor or local office if you feel uncomfortable about any aspect of your role

- engage with your mentor or designated other to enable you to develop your skills in accordance with the RCN practice standards

- always seek advice and support from your local office if you suspect potential discrimination against a member/group of members

- support and promote the RCN’s mission and strategic plan and RCN policies in your role as an RCN representative

- offer constructive feedback to help shape the RCN’s mission and strategic direction.

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4 RCN Representatives’ practice standards, RCN Publications, RCN Online www.rcn.org.uk, publication code 003 814
Your commitment to us, you will:

Engage with and participate in discussions and decision-making while considering the impact on other people and parts of the organisation; be open about your actions, decisions and about your part in reaching collective decisions. You will:

- always seek advice from your country or regional communications officer/RCN officer before speaking to the media
- consult with members in decision-making as appropriate and be able to demonstrate your accountability to members when negotiating or bargaining on your behalf
- work in partnership with other trade union colleagues in the workplace
- work in partnership with your local RCN office on issues arising at the partnership forum or local meetings. Brief and involve RCN officers appropriately and inform your local RCN office of potential problems/issues, providing them with up-to-date knowledge of what is happening in your area.

Ensure that where matters are confidential, the reasons are within the RCN policy and confidentiality is maintained. You will:

- use the RCN’s case management system to record and document activity in supporting members and in line with the Data Protection Act 1988
- always store member records safely and securely and seek support from your local branch or local RCN office if you need resources to do this effectively
- keep information about individual cases confidential.

Do not use your position to gain financial or other benefits, for example awards and honours, for yourself, family or friends. You will:

- act in a way that is consistent with the RCN’s conflict of interest policy.

Declare personal interests, and not put yourself under obligations that may influence or affect your performance in the role. You will:

- act in a way that is consistent with the RCN’s conflict of interest policy.

When in a governance role, act and/or vote on the basis of your own judgement – taking into consideration members’ views. You will:

- ensure in appropriate forums the views you express on issues are those of RCN members which may not necessarily be your own personal views.

Promote and support these principles by leadership and example. You will:

- act as a role model to others supporting less experienced representatives to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to perform their role effectively.

6 RCN Conflict of interest policy www.rcn.org.uk
Find out more...

WEB  www.rcn.org.uk/activist
RCN Direct  www.rcn.org.uk/direct
CALL  0345 772 6100