



Strategic plan 2013-18



Royal College
of Nursing

Introduction

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. We aim to think and act as part of the global community.

We work closely with UK, European and international agencies, including trade unions, professional associations and voluntary organisations to help shape health policy in the interests of the public, patients and our members. We work to protect and improve the quality and standard of patient care and the patient experience. We do this both by identifying the causes of poor care and how these can be remedied by investing in nursing and by promoting excellent and innovative practice. We promote the interests of nurses, health care assistants, health care support workers, assistant practitioners, patients and communities in a global context.

Quality patient care relies on the interdependence between the skill, numbers and expertise of nursing staff and the environments in which they work. Our dual role as a professional body and trade union puts us in a unique position to protect and enhance both sides of this equation. Understanding nursing as a whole, we are able to defend this balance as we seek to advance the profession.

This new strategy sets out how we will seek to make progress over the next five years.



Promoting **excellence** in practice

1. Place patients and patient safety at the forefront of everything we do. Support improvements in professional standards by contributing to the full range of nursing activity: improve the way in which knowledge and evidence is used in decision-making to ensure that health care is safe, effective and centred on people.
2. Develop and disseminate clinical best practice: challenge clinical and management systems that impede good care. Work with patient groups, employers and other health care providers to highlight good practice and to identify evidence that demonstrates a failure to provide the quality of service required.
3. As the largest professional union in the world, with more than 420,000 members, use the full range of our membership's professional clinical skills to deliver measurable improvements in practice through our member networks, education and advice services, guidance and influencing work.
4. Work with other royal colleges, significant stakeholders and education training boards, to promote and maintain innovative international and European relationships to maximise opportunities that support the nursing voice.
5. Use our knowledge and profile to demonstrate to the public how nursing contributes to safeguarding health and wellbeing.
6. Respond positively to public interest and concerns about nursing, giving an accurate picture of the profession, showing what nursing can offer and presenting RCN members as guardians of the profession.

Nursing development and education

7. Secure the future education of nursing staff in higher education, promoting an accurate, positive picture of the future nursing workforce. Work with higher education and employers to secure the right balance of academic preparation and practical clinical experience during pre-registration education. Engage the voice and experience of nursing students to strengthen the quality of their learning experience.
8. Actively promote preceptorship with all relevant partner organisations, seeking automatic, mandatory clinical supervision, preceptorship and continuous professional development once pre-registration education is complete.
9. Lobby for provision to keep nurses updated, addressing post-registration pathways and education. Argue for better access to continuing professional development in the workplace. In the interests of patient safety and clinical best practice, work for the same regard to be given to continuing nursing education as to continuing medical education.
10. Tackle workforce planning and staffing levels that have a negative effect on patient safety. Address the impact of poor staffing levels on training and development in the workplace. Oppose imposed 12-hour shifts and the “casualisation” of how our members work and identify solutions that protect the health and wellbeing of patients and staff.

Shaping health policies

- 11. Draw on the best available evidence and expertise to contribute to change in health and social care policy. Recognise the wider determinants of health and become more proactive in advocating and supporting greater engagement between nursing, health and other sectors that affect the wellbeing of a population.**
- 12. Lead and cultivate from the grassroots policies that influence nursing and the wider health and social care economy. Provide information to members about the key policy work being undertaken.**
- 13. Share intelligence and work collaboratively within the RCN and with other organisations. Support capacity building in other national nursing associations and global partnerships.**
- 14. Use RCN expertise to influence Governments, opinion formers and decision makers.**

Representing nurses and nursing

15. Provide representation and support to members and accredited representatives on the frontline. Protect members' pay, terms and conditions and support their employment interests in the workplace. Enhance our partnerships with other trade unions, professional organisations, clients and service users, and work within Europe and beyond to enhance our international membership.
16. Maintain our commitment to equal pay and monitor how pay levels are being set. Support and protect members affected by moves to other employers.
17. Increase the number and visibility of our accredited representatives, recognising the value and calibre of their work. Negotiate and monitor the implementation of protected, equitable trade union facilities time, and address issues around the working time directive. Retain activists' skills and knowledge.
18. Improve local member engagement in decision-making through member involvement with our boards and branches. Strengthen the engagement of our boards and networks with accredited representatives and members on key issues.
19. Enable nursing staff to engage with the RCN, regardless of the size or type of their organisation. Recognise that the integration of health and social care will require members to work beyond the NHS in new settings such as local authorities and social enterprises. Support them through change. Build relationships and networks with the independent and voluntary sectors that allow the development and negotiation of recognition agreements. Develop and implement a refreshed strategy for this sector.

Representing nurses and nursing

20. Campaign for a respectful working environment. Highlight how nursing staff have to balance care against bureaucracy and lobby for greater protection around whistleblowing without recrimination. Address the issue of increased disciplinary action against nurses and the prevalence of suspension and referral to the Nursing and Midwifery Council.
21. Empower nurses to speak up when asked to work outside their professional boundaries, which may mask a reduction in specialist expertise that is harmful to patients' interests. Support capacity building for nurse leaders so that they can fulfil board-level responsibilities effectively and champion nursing and patient care.
22. Encourage GPs to make effective use of nurses in commissioning roles. Highlight the role of the nurse in multidisciplinary teams. Protect the title "registered nurse" in all settings where registered nurses work.
23. Recruit and retain health practitioner members, and increase our activity to achieve registration, regulation and mandatory training for all categories of health care support workers. Engage with and promote policies which will improve the regulation of health settings and work to improve the effectiveness of the Nursing and Midwifery Council and other regulators relevant to RCN members in all employment settings.

An **effective,** value-for-money organisation

24. Emphasise the benefits gained from our dual role as a professional organisation and trade union. Take advantage of the opportunities that role presents us with to develop nursing and patient care across the UK, Europe and internationally, and to re-align our services in line with the changing structure of the Nursing and Midwifery Council.
25. Actively listen to the voice of members. Promote member involvement and communication, ensuring that nursing staff are at the forefront developing and delivering our work. Enable the voice of members and the membership to be heard through a broad range of media channels.
26. Increase our income by marketing products and services built on our professional knowledge and reputation. Increase recruitment and improve retention, emphasising to existing and prospective members that greater membership builds the strength of the organisation.
27. Explore mechanisms to support greater engagement with health care assistants and students who have fewer opportunities to attend RCN events.
28. Extend our work on environmental and corporate social responsibility as tangible expressions of our commitment to universal human rights and to health and wellbeing. Be seen as a world-class champion of diversity, equality and human rights by promoting equity and by challenging actions that perpetuate inequality.