A GUIDE TO THE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY FOR RCN REPRESENTATIVES

January - December 2015

Wear the badge on the outside.
Feel the pride on the inside.
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Welcome to the RCN’s learning and development pathway for RCN representatives. This high-quality programme is delivered at a local level for newly-accredited RCN representatives, and recognises the importance of the role you will play in supporting our members. It is designed to be responsive to meet the changing needs of representatives in the workplace, and ensure you get the most out of your role both now and in the future.

We look forward to supporting you to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that will help you become a competent, confident and valued representative of the RCN.

We always welcome feedback on how we can improve the pathway to better meet your needs. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with your country representative with any ideas:

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Northern Ireland:
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Scotland:
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Wales:
david.wallace@rcn.org.uk

I hope you are inspired by what we have to offer you, and may I wish you the best of luck as you embark on your learning journey with the RCN. We will be here to support you every step of the way.

With best wishes

Dr Peter Carter OBE
RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary
As an RCN representative, you will be expected to meet the RCN’s practice standards for representatives in your role. This learning and development pathway has been designed to prepare you for this task. Below is an overview of each role; the latest versions of the role descriptors can be found on the RCN website at www.rcn.org.uk/activist. There are three types of RCN representative roles.

**RCN accredited trade union learning representative**

**Summary of role:** to promote the value of learning by offering support to all members to plan and manage their learning, and by working collaboratively with the RCN, employers and other stakeholders to negotiate and protect learning in the workplace for all staff.

**RCN accredited trade union safety representative**

**Summary of role:** to promote a safe working environment, ensuring members’ rights to a safe and healthy workplace, and by working collaboratively with the RCN, employers and other stakeholders to recognise and influence the management of risk in the workplace.

**RCN accredited trade union steward**

**Summary of role:** to promote the value of partnership working, facilitating the fair treatment of RCN members through collective and individual representation and by working collaboratively with the RCN, employers and other stakeholders to negotiate and promote good employment practice in the workplace.
ABOUT THE PATHWAY

The pathway is led by RCN Council, and is designed to support you to achieve the practice standards for your role. Created by the RCN learning and development (L&D) team, the programme has been developed in collaboration with the UK committees for learning representatives, safety representatives and stewards, the Membership Representation Committee (MRC), RCN representatives, RCN officers and other valued stakeholders.

The pathway focuses on meeting your learning outcomes in preparation for practice, and combines facilitated learning with structured supported learning. This enables you to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to be an effective RCN representative. The programme is delivered by key RCN staff in your region/country, and other relevant parties.

During the programme, you will work towards meeting the assessment criteria against a set of learning outcomes for each module. You will be given individual support throughout from a learning and development facilitator (LDF) and a named mentor (see page 10).

The RCN has appointed an external accreditation provider, the Open College Network (OCN), to work in partnership with us on the pathway. External accreditation ensures that our learning and development provision is of a consistently high standard, enables learners to develop the required knowledge and skills, and is fit for purpose in preparing you for your role as a representative. Accreditation also provides quality assurance, and a ‘kite mark’ against agreed UK standards for learning development.
The pathway aims to make the process of learning as clear and straightforward as possible, and is made up of stages to help you monitor your progress. Mentorship and support from RCN staff is key to helping you identify your ongoing learning and development needs, and become competent in your role.

**Moving through the pathway**

The following diagram depicts the journey that you will take from accreditation through to practice. You will be supported by an RCN mentor every step of the way.

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<tr>
<th>Mentorship</th>
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<td>Accreditation as a representative</td>
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<td>Foundation module</td>
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<td>Continuing L&amp;D in practice</td>
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Learning is assessed at the end of the foundation module, and again at the end of the development module. Your L&D facilitator will ensure that you receive feedback during the learning process to help you monitor your understanding and skills development. Your final assessment at the end of the development module acknowledges your readiness to commence your practice in role.
THE FOUNDATION MODULE

Designed to give you a general introduction to the RCN and the role of representatives, this five day module consists of both facilitated and supported learning.

Completing the foundation module

When you have been accredited in a specific role as an RCN representative, you will be allocated a place on the foundation module. You will be expected to begin the module within three months of being accredited, or as soon as possible thereafter. Please contact your regional/country RCN office for details of module dates. During the module, you will be expected to develop a portfolio of evidence of your learning that demonstrates your general understanding of the representative role and how your learning can be applied in the workplace. You will be supported to develop this portfolio, which will be assessed at the end of the module against a set of generic assessment criteria.

“There are many skills that I have developed as a representative and drawn upon as a nurse. I have improved my skills in communication, personal and people development, service improvement, quality and equality and diversity. These skills can only enhance my future career opportunities.”

Raquah Shahir, RCN steward
When you have been assessed as having demonstrated an understanding of the generic representative role, you will next undertake the development module specific to your learning representative, safety representative and steward role.

The development module is designed to enhance and promote your understanding of your specialist role. You will be supported to continue to develop your portfolio of evidence of learning, which will be assessed against the specialist assessment criteria specific to your representative role.

Completing the development module

Once you have successfully completed the foundation module, you will be eligible to access the next available development module. It is expected that you will start the development module as soon as possible after completing the foundation module. Please contact your regional/country RCN office for details of module dates.

“My role as a learning representative is instrumental in helping people across the workplace to gain the confidence to embark on the skills training they need to succeed. My experience has been beneficial in helping my colleagues to improve both their skills and career prospects.”

Pauline Harrison,
RCN learning representative and steward
CONTINUING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (CL&D)

A number of learning and development opportunities are available for you when you have completed both the foundation and development modules, or if you are an experienced representative.

With local support from your mentor, you will develop a personal development plan to identify and address your learning needs. This will help you continue to develop your knowledge and skills, and build a portfolio of evidence of your learning in practice. The learning opportunities include workshops, shadowing more experienced representatives, or attending events and conferences.

How to access CL&D opportunities

Details of workshops, programmes and events, and how to apply, are outlined in the RCN’s guide, *Continuing learning and development for RCN representatives in England*.

“Undertaking the pathway reminded me that there is legislation to support safety representatives in their role. Networking with other reps, accessing other RCN learning and development opportunities and mandatory training from my trust have given me the opportunity to meet many different people. This has given me the confidence and knowledge to approach senior managers within the trust about issues that will protect staff and patients. The portfolio allows me to continue to document what I have learned. Keeping the evidence organised in one place makes it easier to find when I need it to support my colleagues or other activists. The time I spent producing it has been worthwhile.”

Pauline Harrison, RCN learning representative and steward
Your portfolio will be assessed at two points on the pathway; at the end of the foundation module, and at the end of the development module. While assessment at the end of the foundation module is a step to progressing onto the development module, you will still be expected to submit evidence of your learning within your portfolio to your LDF.

By the end of the pathway you will be required to have demonstrated evidence of understanding in relation to the underpinning knowledge around your representative role. You will also be expected to interpret and reflect on how your learning can be applied in the specific context of your role as a representative.

The diagram on the following page depicts your journey as a representative from novice to expert, as you learn about the concepts underpinning the pathway and apply these to your day-to-day representative practice.

**Submitting your learning portfolio**

You must present your completed portfolio for assessment on the final day of the development module, having previously received feedback and support from your LDF. You will continue to build your portfolio of evidence as you move into practice, supported by your mentor.

You will be given further guidance on assessment when you start the pathway, and of course you will have the support of both your LDF and mentor as you progress on your learning journey with the RCN.
This diagram was developed from Miller’s Prism of Clinical Competence. Available at www.gp-training.net/training/educational_theory/adult_learning/miller.htm

**Practice Standards**

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<td>Professional Authenticity</td>
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<td>Attitudes</td>
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**Pathway Learning Outcomes**

- **Know**
  - Understand underpinning of concepts
  - Know
- **Show how**
  - Demonstrating concepts in practice
- **Do**
  - Use concepts in practice

**Evidence of developing in practice against personal development plan (PDP)**

**Evidence of application of learning against practice indicators**

**Evidence of learning against development module assessment criteria**

**Evidence of learning against foundation module assessment criteria**

**Evidence of applying against educational goals**

**Practice Standards**

**Practice Standards**
Representatives are supported on the pathway by the LDF in their region/country as well as by their mentor. Mentors are usually an RCN officer, but could also be someone from the region with a specific responsibility for representatives’ learning and development.

The RCN has developed a comprehensive support programme that is designed to ensure that all RCN representatives, whether newly accredited or highly experienced feel confident and competent in their role and that will help them provide an effective and high quality service to RCN members.

The RCN mentoring and supervision process has been designed to support you to build on the learning outcomes from the foundation and development modules during your progress through the pathway.

Once you have moved into practising in your role as a representative you will receive both supervision and mentorship support. Supervision aims to ensure that you are competent to carry out your role safely whilst mentorship aims to encourage reflective practice to develop your confidence and self reliance. For more information on resources please visit www.rcn.org.uk/support/activist

“I started the foundation module with some reservations but the learning experience far exceeded my expectations. The support and help from my learning and development facilitator, RCN staff and other reps has been invaluable. I’ve just completed my portfolio and am pleased with how much I’ve already been able to achieve. I’m looking forward to my new role and the benefits it will bring to my colleagues and patients.”

Karen Dutton,
RCN learning representative
Continuing learning and development for RCN representatives in England

The RCN promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies

January 2015

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Published by the Royal College of Nursing
20 Cavendish Square
London
W1G oRN
020 7409 3333

Publication code 004 698
PROUD
to overcome challenges

As you strive to make a difference in your role as a rep, there’ll inevitably be times when you’ll feel tested. But we’ll be with you every step of the way, offering the support and development you need to overcome challenges and make a real and lasting impact in the workplace.

Wear the badge on the outside. Feel the pride on the inside.

Royal College of Nursing

www.rcn.org.uk/reps