

Annual Report to RCN Council 2016
UK Learning Representatives Committee

Introduction

This report seeks to demonstrate the activities, successes and the challenges faced by the RCN UK Learning Representative Committee from the 1st January 2016 to end December 2016.

Committee Membership

Greta Alleyne - West Midlands Region
Melanie Barnard - Yorkshire & the Humber Region
Paul Brown - Eastern Region
Marva Duncan – East Midlands Region
Karen Dutton (vice chair) – Northern Region
Jean Rogers – North West Region
Karen Sanders (chair) – London Region
Chris Starnes - South East Region
Sandra Robinson Clark – Wales
Sindy King – Northern Ireland

Katy Welsh – South West Region (August 2016)

Vacant Seats – Scotland
South West Region (until August 2016)

In an attempt to fill the two vacant seats at the beginning of the year an election campaign was held but produced no nominations for the vacant seats.

A new election period opened in March and ran throughout the Joint Representatives Conference in Liverpool; in the hope that interest could be garnered by members of the UK Learning Representatives Committee from the Learning Representatives attending but with no success.

The Scotland and South Eastern Boards were contacted in an attempt to seek their assistance in filling both vacant seats.

Members of the UK Learning Representatives Committee, at Congress 2016, sought to interest Learning Representatives who might be willing to fill the two vacant seats. As a result the seat in the South West Region was filled.

The seat in Scotland remains vacant.

Sue Antrobus (staff lead), Members of the Learning and Development Team, Amy Cole (governance), Siobhan Smyth (governance), and Jane Clarke have supported the Committee in its work throughout the year.

General Information

Meetings were held on the following dates and attendance was

3rd February 2016 – 90% attendance

9 committee members attended the meeting.

1 committee member was unable to attend due to illness.

The Scotland seat and South West seat remained vacant.

24th May 2016 – 80% attendance

8 committee members attended the meeting.

1 committee member was unable to attend due to work commitments.

1 committee member was unable to attend due to illness.

The Scotland seat and South West seat remained vacant.

31st August 2016 – 73% attendance

8 committee members attended the meeting.

1 committee members was unable to attend due to work commitments.

2 committee members were unable to attend due to personal commitments.

The Scotland seat remained vacant.

At the meeting on the 3rd February it was agreed that the committee's present work-plan was too large and was unmanageable. Sue Antrobus and Maria Lewis worked with the Committee to further refine the work-plan; in an attempt to focus on fewer issues in order to better deliver measurable outcomes.

The UK Learning Representative Committee considered the ways of working shared by all of the UK Committees before reviewing the MRC Priorities and agreeing what the Committee's contribution to them should be over the coming 12 months. The Committee agreed the following priorities and actions towards each priority:

MRC PRIORITY - Pay, terms and conditions

Mandatory training in workplaces - access to, and appropriateness of, mode of delivery

Members are having difficulty accessing mandatory training. Additionally in some workplaces the mode of delivery (e-learning) is not always appropriate for the intended learning outcomes. The UK Learning Representative Committee will work with the Health and Safety Committee who have safety issues regarding this, to undertake a scoping exercise to find out the extent of the problem and the evidence on best methods to deliver mandatory training.

Mentorship of learners in the workplace

Nationally work is underway between the RCN, Council of Deans and the NMC to explore the challenges and problems associated with mentorship of learners in the workplace and to develop appropriate solutions. The UK Learning Representative Committee will work with the RCN Students Committee,

Education Forum and RCN Nursing Department to inform the NMC consultation on the development of new Pre Registration Practice Standards on the Mentorship of Learners. The UK Learning Representative Committee held a successful Fringe Event at Congress 2016 addressing this issue.

Supporting the RCN's Pay campaign

The RCN has a pay strategy group to decide on the RCN's approach to national pay negotiation. Part of this work may require the mobilisation of RCN members around the RCN's pay campaign. When the time is right the UK Learning Representative Committee will work with the Stewards Committee to provide leadership for Learning Representatives to organise and prepare members to campaign on pay, terms and conditions.

MRC PRIORITY - Accredited representatives, recruitment, retention and support

Recruiting active learning reps and supporting them in role

Learning Representatives continue to decline in number. Locally each region and country has a recruitment plan for representatives. Nationally the Valuing Representatives activity work is underway to highlight the importance of Learning Representatives in the workplace in an attempt to retain and recruit further representatives. The UK Learning Representative Committee will work with the Valuing Reps Group, Board Chairs, Regional and Country Directors, Sue Antrobus and the Learning and Development team to:

- Inform the development of a plan that highlights the importance of Learning Representatives in the workplace teams
- Develop a system of buddying for newly accredited Learning representatives to support them in their new role
- Work with the Board Chair and Director in every region and country to inform and support their local recruitment plan for Learning Representatives.
- Test a new link/support role as a way of recruiting to the LR role.

Committee achievements

1. Members of the UK Learning Representative Committee have been involved in developing Local Learning Networks in their Country/Region alongside members of the Stewards and Safety Representatives Committee.

2. Members of the UK Learning Representative Committee were involved in the creation of a film outlining the roles of the three representatives, which was recorded at the Joint Reps Conference in March, this year and which has been shown as part of the Foundation Module of the Representative Pathway.

3. Members of the UK Learning Representative Committee have been involved in the development of the Learning Representative Development Module alongside Maria Lewis, the pathway leader.

4. UK Learning Representative Committee members are now meeting newly accredited learning representatives during the development modules to enable new representatives to ask questions and to hear an experienced representative outline and discuss the learning representative role. A template letter has been created; to be given to newly accredited Learning Representatives during the Learning Representative Development Module. The letter introduces the newly accredited representatives to their local UK Learning Representative Committee Member and aims to create a link for support, facilitated by the Committee Member. The UK Learning Representative Committee have requested that this approach be shared by Safety Representatives and Stewards

5. In 2015, at Congress members of the UK Learning Representatives Committee began gathering evidence regarding the needs, the support needed and resources required by members as they use Information and communications technology (ICT) in their workplace. In June 2016, an ICT survey, developed by two members of the committee was circulated to 19,201 RCN members. The findings demonstrated that most respondents did not reclaim the time taken on I.T. training or use of IT. equipment outside of their working hours for Mandatory Training. Notably, 50% of respondents felt that they had not received adequate training from their employers to use the equipment and software; that on-line training can be effective but that staff need to have the skills to use the I.T. equipment and software in order to carry out online training. One of the outcomes of the survey has been that the UK Learning Representative Committee and the UK Safety Reps Committee have agreed to work together to explore the issues raised by on-line mandatory training.

6. Two members of the UK Learning Representative Committee attended the Mentorship summit held on 29th April 2016 and hosted by the RCN with both the NMC and Council of Deans present. At this the NMC agreed that the NMC Practice Standards were no longer fit for purpose

Anne Corrin has kept the Committee informed of the ongoing work within the RCN and NMC addressing the Mentorship of Learners. When the NMC consults on the development of new Pre Registration Practice Standards on the Mentorship of Learners, the UK Learning Representative Committee agreed it would like to contribute to the RCN response.

7. The UK Learning Representatives Committee has responded to RCN consultations on Branch Funding, Congress Funding Allocation Process, Student bursary, the Nursing Associate role and the Apprenticeship Levy

8. UK Learning Representatives Committee members are members of the Membership and Representation Committee (MRC), Trade Union Governance Group (TUGG), Pay Review Sub Committee, Joint Representative Conference Planning Committee, Revalidation Task & Finish Group, Activist website Project, Diversity and Inclusion Group, Valuing the Representative Group, Valuing the Learning and Safety Representative Group and the Representative Role Descriptor Review Group.

9. The UK Learning Representative Committee proposed that a new link activist's role should be created, for those who do not want to commit to being an RCN Representative at present but could offer support locally and act as a communication resource. The Committee asked TUGG to support the testing of a link activist role in one area and to review the effectiveness of the role before considering wider implementation. The matter was referred to RCN Council.

10. The UK Learning Representative Committee has concerns that there are not enough materials for Representatives to use in the recruitment of members and representatives. The UK Learning Representative Committee has requested that an up-to-date centralised resource for recruitment be created and that the UK Committees have their own 'bible' of information, which would be taken to the development module of the Pathway. This suggestion was put to the Steward and Safety Representative Committees at the Joint Reps Committee in September 2016.

Congress

1. The UK Learning Representative Committee led a successful Congress Fringe Event addressing the Mentorship of Learners in the Workplace.

2. Members of the UK Learning Representatives Committee were involved alongside other Representatives on the Representatives stands at Congress 2016, in collecting the details of members who expressed an interest in becoming an accredited Representative.

3. The Committee chair supported the Student Committee during one of their Fringe Events.

Work in Progress

It was agreed that the Committee needed to be more vocal after Congress 2016 to ensure that they were involved in work on relevant agenda items. The UK Learning Representative Committee agreed to be involved in addressing the following items post Congress 2016.

Item 5: That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to lobby for mandatory domestic abuse awareness training for all health care workers.

Item 10: That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to promote the concept that every nurse should be an Enurse.

Item 15: That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the impact of the Nursing Associate role.

Item 25e: In light of the statement made by Professor Patton this meeting of RCN Congress asks Council to consider the way the RCN engages in political decision making that impacts on nursing and health and well-being of the UK.

The UK Learning Representative Committee has reviewed and refined its annual workplan in order to focus on fewer issues and in order to better deliver measurable outcomes.

Committee Work to Support and Develop their Respective Representative Role

UK Learning Representative Committee members are able to use their knowledge, understanding, skills and experiences to encourage other representatives and members to work collaboratively with their employers, in order to create an environment where learning is welcomed, encouraged and enabled and where RCN members, RCN representatives and colleagues work to ensure Gold Standard Patient Care, Safety and Respect for all. They do this by supporting and helping: develop new RCN networks, the Branch Activity, their Regional/Country Board and Director, Fellow Representatives and Committee Members. They attend Joint Representative Conferences, National, Regional/Country training events, meetings in their workplace and within the RCN. They review the role descriptors of accredited representatives, contribute to 'Bulletin' and 'Activate'. in order to promote their work. They develop resources in order to retain and recruit representatives and respond when appropriate via the media

Effectiveness Review

This year's review, completed at the August meeting, revealed that all the scores have increased since 2015. The UK Learning Representative Committee is encouraged by this.

Great improvement was seen regarding the Committee members understanding of their own role on the Committee and what is expected of them. A lot of work has been done over the recent year to improve the representative role descriptors and a yearly induction event and induction packs for new members have been created.

Great improvement has also been seen regarding the annual work-plan. Sue Antrobus, Maria Lewis and the Committee have done a large amount of work to develop the work-plan, focusing on few issues and concentrating on the delivery of measurable outcomes.

The Committee meetings encourage a high quality of debate with robust and probing discussions.

Challenges and Barriers

1. Not all members of the Committee understand the decision-making and reporting governance model that the RCN is building and use it effectively to raise issues and ensure that their member's voices are heard at Board, UKLRC and Council level.

2. Due to workload issues not all members of the UK Learning Representative Committee demonstrate an appropriate degree of involvement in the work of the committee both at meetings and between meetings. Some have insufficient time and as a result are unable to fulfil their responsibilities fully.

3. Members of the UK Learning Representative Committee feel that the number and the length of meetings is not sufficient to allow the Committee to discharge its duties as it would like to. The meeting agenda is usually very crowded.

Conclusion

Three new members have been elected to join the UK Learning Representatives committee next year, including Katy Welsh.

In 2018 three committee members will step down having completed two 4-year terms. Interested learning representatives particularly from these three regions are to be encouraged to attend Committee meetings to observe the function of the Committee over the coming 18 months. This is a model successfully employed by Northern Ireland during the recent election process.

The Committee agreed a number of indicators, which could be used to show its effectiveness over the next 12 months:

- To continue to increase the profile of Learning Reps across the RCN and workplace.
- To ensure representation across all regions and countries on the Committee
- To complete the workplan successfully
- To continue building on recruitment and retention of Reps.
- To continue to develop collaborative working relationships between the UK Representative Committees and the Accredited Representatives.