



Royal College of Nursing  
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## **UK Safety Reps Committee Annual Report to RCN Council 2016**

### **Introduction**

This report demonstrates the successes and challenges faced by the RCN UK Safety Reps Committee from January 2016 to end December 2016

### **Committee Membership**

Denise McLaughlin (Chair) – Northern Region

Lesley Pallett (Vice Chair) – South West

Martin MacGregor – Scotland

David McKerr – Northern Ireland

Janet Hindle – North West

Neil Thompson – East Midlands

Alison Upton – South East

Mitzi Wilson – West Midlands

Michael Oyeleye – Eastern

Debbie Hammil – Yorkshire and the Humber

Billy Nicholls – Wales

Ian Norris – London

The committee is supported by Kim Sunley, Senior ERD Advisor.

## General Information

Please see the committee terms of reference at the link below:

[www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/how-the-rcn-is-governed/rcn-committees-and-groups/safety-representatives-committee](http://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/how-the-rcn-is-governed/rcn-committees-and-groups/safety-representatives-committee)

The committee meets 3 times a year and in addition, we also meet jointly with the UK Stewards Committee and UK Learning Reps Committee twice a year.

### January 2016 – 100%

9 committee members attended the meeting.

The London, Scotland and North West seat remained vacant.

### May 2016 – 100% attendance

12 committee members attended the meeting.

No vacancies remained.

### September 2016 – 83%

10 committee members attended the meeting.

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

No vacancies remained.

The work plan developed by the UK Safety Reps committee contributes towards RCN Council and Member Representation Committee priorities, ensuring that health and safety matters are considered and addressed appropriately.

## Committee achievements

- Over the last year, the committee have been working closely with Member Support Services and the Employment Relations Department as part of work being completed to support reps in their roles. This work has developed and produced the guidance 'Supporting You to Support Members' which was shared at the Joint Reps conference in September. There have been articles published in Activate to inform reps of the work of the committee particularly in relation to the stress in reps work.
- More recently this year, the committee have begun to improve engagement with the Health and Safety Executive in order to discuss and influence their work in the health sector. Particularly in relation to work related stress.

- The committee have been involved in shaping new guidance regarding lone working and personal safety which was published this year. This work was completed as a result of the outcome of a Congress agenda item from 2015.
- Ongoing areas of work for the committee include involvement in Safety Reps module 2 training, being present at the training to give the new safety reps the opportunity to speak to a more experienced rep.
- In summer this year, the committee became involved in a new project looking at how the RCN value our reps. As part of this work, delegates attending the joint reps conference in September were invited to give their ideas for the project. From this, valuable information has been received and collated which the project group are now working on progressing.

Each committee member leads a Health and Safety network in their region / country. The format differs in each area, some being virtual whilst others meet regularly. Via the networks, safety reps are able to inform their relevant UK committee member of health and safety issues they are facing in their area. This information is vital in informing the committee's work plan and ensuring we are addressing the issues faced by reps locally.

There are also two opportunities a year for reps who attend the joint reps conferences to raise issues with members of all three rep committees and inform the national joint reps work.

## **Congress**

All UK Safety Rep Committee members are supported to attend congress. There are 7 voting seats and the voting sessions are divided between committee members by way of a rota.

During Congress week, committee members support a variety of activity both within the debates and outside the main hall sessions.

Members of the committee over recent years have supported the development of a Reps Stand in the exhibition at Congress, the aim being to give members attending Congress the opportunity to discuss representative roles with UK committee members.

The UK Safety Reps Committee host the annual John Goodlad Lecture at Congress. The Committee are involved in the decision regarding speakers invited to deliver the lecture and the Chair and Vice Chair of the committee chair the session.

In 2016, the committee were successful in having a matter for discussion accepted onto the Congress agenda which now forms part of the committee work plan. All committee members are active during Congress and a number have spoken in or presented debates raising issues of Health and Safety importance.

This year at Congress, the committee also delivered a fringe event demonstrating the implementation of the Healthy Workplace, Healthy You Toolkit in partnership with an NHS employing organisation.

Following Congress it is agreed via MRC (Membership Representation Committee) and the UK Safety Reps committee which work streams we will be involved in, thus ensuring appropriate input with Congress resolutions.

### **Work in Progress**

Members of the committee have recently commenced a joint project with the UK Learning Reps Committee considering access to and effectiveness of mandatory training offered to Nurses and Nursing Assistants by employing organisations.

Safe staffing has been discussed at Congress and is regularly an area of concern for all reps. The UK Safety Reps Committee have not been able to progress this work as quickly as was hoped and plans are in place to progress this work at our first meeting in 2017. Barriers in progressing the safe staffing work include the difficulty in achieving a four country perspective as each of the UK countries have differing approaches.

Work with the HSE will continue and the plan is to improve links with the committee and to be able to influence work in the health sector.

### **Committee work to support and develop their respective representative role**

As a committee member, you are representing your Region or Country on matters relating to Health and Safety Reps. Having the opportunity to network nationally and influence the work of the RCN relating to health and safety.

Committee members have this year again been involved in reviewing the role descriptors for RCN Health and Safety Reps and will continue to participate in this rolling programme.

### **Effectiveness Review**

At its meeting in September committee members completed the annual effectiveness review to examine how the committee functions and how we can measure success.

The results of the review were extremely positive, clearly showing that Committee members feel that there have been improvements across the board in the way we work and our achievements over the previous 12 months. Most notably the work around the Committee work plan, which is now streamlined with clear outputs, outcomes, and responsibilities has been well received. The Committee also feels better supported in being able to achieve its goals and better informed on relevant issues. We noted that new ways of working between meetings has significantly impacted on our ability to achieve our growing aspirations.

There were naturally areas for development and as a result of the review we will be working to increase the profile of the Committee during 2017 through greater visibility at RCN events and more contributions to RCN and nursing publications. We have also agreed to work more closely with the UK Learning Reps Committee and the UK Stewards Committee on joint initiatives and we continue to push for access to the Case Management System for safety reps so that we can contribute to cases which involve health and safety issues and give us the ability to record and be recognised for our non-case work.

## **Challenges and Barriers**

The biggest challenge faced by the UKSRC this year has been the time to meet together as a committee to progress our work plan. This is challenging as there is generally a very busy, full agenda for our meetings which doesn't always allow for extended discussion of details to achieve outcomes from the work plan. This is currently resolved by additional teleconference meetings for task and finish groups to focus on specific work projects and the use of a shared ftp site to complete work between meetings.

The challenge of time has been identified within the committee effectiveness review.

## **Conclusion**

The UK Safety Reps Committee will continue to work with the UK Learning Reps Committee focusing on mandatory training. With the intention of developing some meaningful and useful guidance for workplace reps and members.

Other areas of work will include work to influence safe staffing, shift patterns and the use of e-rostering whilst maintaining safe working patterns and promoting employee wellbeing in the workplace.

Also, continuing the work to support reps in fulfilling their roles. All of which support the RCN Council and MRC priorities

Externally to the RCN, the committee will continue to build links and working relationships with leads at the Health and Safety Executive to inform and influence

their work within the healthcare sector. Particularly in relation to the new work the HSE are embarking on to reduce work related stress.

Denise McLaughlin

Chair UK Safety Reps Committee

November 2016