



Royal College of Nursing
Shaping nursing since 1916

UK Stewards Committee

Annual Report to RCN Council 2016

Introduction

This report gives assurance to RCN Council that the UK Stewards committee is fulfilling its terms of reference and demonstrates the successes and challenges faced by the committee from 1 January 2016 to end December 2016.

Committee Membership

London – Michael Smith

Eastern – Marcia Turnham

South East – Ngaire Cox (Vice Chair)

South West – Kathy Lawrie

East Midlands – Michael Hayworth

West Midlands – Phil Noyes

Northern – Michael Appleby

Yorks and Humber – Anne Penny

North West – Catherine Leach

Scotland – Graham Revie (Chair)

Northern Ireland – Joanne McGillin

Wales – Jane Carroll, succeeded by Ann Thomas

The committee is supported by Gerry O'Dwyer, Senior Employment Relations Adviser and has benefited from presentations from a range of staff leads throughout the year.

General Information

The full terms of reference for the committee are found on the RCN website. [Link.](#)

During 2016, the committee has held three quorate meetings, and has also held two joint meetings with the UK Learning representative and the UK Safety representative committees.

January 2016 – 83%

10 committee members attended the meeting.

The Yorkshire and Humber seat was vacant at this point of the year and apologies were given from one member.

May 2016 – 67% attendance

8 committee members attended the meeting.

Apologies were given from four members but no vacancies remained.

September 2016 – 58%

7 committee members attended the meeting.

4 committee members were unable to attend and one member contributed to part of the meeting by teleconference. No vacancies remained.

Committee achievements

The committee started its work for the year with a development session focusing on the committee's contribution to the delivery of Council and MRC priorities. Our work programme was therefore refined to focus on three areas of work:

- Pay terms and conditions
- Support for RCN Stewards and Committee
- Succession planning.

The committee's main area of work for 2016 has been the RCN Pay Campaign. We fed into the preparation of the RCN evidence that was submitted to the Pay Review Body and we are continuing to disseminate key messages from that evidence through our local networks.

The committee ensures attendance at the Trade Union Governance Group (TUGG) and Membership and Representation Committee (MRC) meetings and the Pay subcommittee (PSC). Committee members have also been involved in task and finish and project groups set up to take forward specific areas of work in partnership with other parts of the organisation, including the Joint reps conference planning group, work to produce the guidance 'Supporting you to Support members'.

The committee is also well represented externally, including NHS Staff Council, and Staff Side, and at the annual European Public Service Union conference.

The committee has been closely involved in work that has followed the progression of the Trade Union Bill through Parliament. We gave feedback on the parliamentary briefs that were prepared on the cost and value of facilities time and fed into the research work on the impact of facilities time. More recently we have discussed how we can help reps and employers capture and understand the value of facilities time to ensure we are well positioned to react strongly to any challenge to facilities times under the Trade Union legislation. We will continue to feed into work in response to consultations on the specific regulations that underpin the Act as and when they are published.

Congress

The committee successfully submitted a resolution on Safe Staffing (8) to the Congress agenda and contributed constructively to the debate and discussion on many other Employment Relations issues on the floor of Congress.

Throughout Congress week, committee members supported rep recruitment from the Reps stand, working with staff from the regions and countries who followed through locally on expressions of interest from individual members.

Following Congress 2016, work on specific Congress items was delegated directly to the UK Stewards committee. For the first time, the committee asked for responsibility to lead on additional items to those we had submitted. MRC asked the committee to lead on Agency Nursing (7) and Pay (12) and we have been involved throughout the year in the work that has contributed to these Congress workstreams.

We also asked to feed into the work on Bullying allegations (18) and Political Engagement (25e).

Work in Progress

At the start of the year, we identified succession planning as a priority area for action. We recognised that several experienced committee members would retire or come to the end of their term of office in 2016. We are very grateful to the committee members who worked hard throughout the year to identify and develop potential successors to their elected committee roles. Succession planning is an ongoing commitment for the committee and looking ahead to 2017, we now have the responsibility to support new committee members to be successful in their role.

We contributed to a scoping session for the development of the new Member Communication Centre and all committee members have now been invited to

complete their training for the new Member Communication Centre. This will enable us to communicate directly with our local reps for the first time.

Throughout the year, we have shared our experiences as we work with our Country and Regional Boards to build and lead local networks. There are a range of activities across the Countries and Regions and we have experienced positive engagement from local Stewards. We are keen to achieve more consistency in this work and feed in our experiences of successes and barriers to effective networking activity in our regular reports to TUGG and MRC.

We have been involved in ongoing work looking at the recruitment and retention of reps. We have also been discussing different organising models, in particular examples from the Independent sector and will be exploring ways to strengthen our links with reps in the Independent sector in 2017.

Committee work to support and develop their respective representative role

Our committee members play a vital role in feeding intelligence into the RCN governance structure and cascading key messages back to our representatives on the front line. Regular attendance at committee meetings and reports on local issues enables us to ensure we are addressing the issues faced by reps locally and shaping RCN positions and policy to better support the representative role. We have kept ourselves well informed through our committee meetings with regular updates on the NHS Staff Council discussions, the work taken forward by the staff side and the Agenda for Change review.

The Stewards handbook has been finalised and uploaded to the Reps Hub on the new RCN website and the committee continues to work with our staff lead to refine and update this important resource.

We have been working with staff leads to prepare timely material for Bulletin and Activate, promoting the work of our committee and commenting on issues of importance to Stewards.

We feed into the annual review of the reps role descriptors to ensure they accurately reflect the evolving role of our reps.

We have been pleased to note the start of the roll out of new training for RCN Officers to successfully deliver the new process for support and mentorship of our Stewards. This partnership model is designed to support and equip our Stewards in their day to day role, bringing RCN staff and Stewards together through a structured framework.

Committee members have played an important role in signposting members to resources to help with revalidation and linking with local Learning reps where possible. We have been reporting back to our country and regional offices where individual issues arise.

We have participated in the Valuing reps work, and given feedback on the consultation exercises that will continue to develop in 2017.

The committee agreed to support the development module of the pathway for reps and members have been attending their regional/country development day to meet and support new Stewards.

Effectiveness Review

The committee carried out its second effectiveness review at the start of the year. It was agreed to use technology to support more effective ways of working in between meetings, to utilise the process to enable reps to observe committee meetings, to develop more guidance to build relationships between Boards and UK reps committee members, and to build the profile and effectiveness of the committee.

The committee has made progress on all these fronts and in particular has welcomed observers from across the countries and regions to many of our meetings during 2016. We warmly encourage reps who would be interested in this opportunity to contact their elected committee member.

The timing of the next effectiveness review will be aligned with the other UK representative committees to ensure there is consistency in the progress we make with our ways of working.

Challenges and Barriers

As the year has progressed, several members have experience challenges in attending full committee meetings. This is indicative of the pressures on time and resource all our RCN reps face in the workplace.

In response to this challenge, we will be looking for ways to lighten the burden of work on our committee members, further streamlining our work programme, and ensuring our responsibilities are shared fairly across the entire committee. We will also be looking for opportunities to use technology to support our work and to help us maximise the use of our time at full meetings.

Conclusion

We believe that the Committees key achievements in 2016 were;

1. Ensuring that the voice of Stewards and members has been a key consideration in the RCNs campaign to ensure fair pay in the NHS
2. The contribution of the Committee to the RCNs work on the UK Governments Trade Union reform agenda. In particular our work on facilities time and the overall RCN response to the consultations on industrial action ballots, picketing and the use of agency workers

Work in 2017 will inevitably be focused on the issue of NHS pay. This however is a generic term for the full value of nurses pay and terms and conditions. Our work has a cycle of pre- Pay Review Body engagement (PRB), response to Government(s) recommendations on the PRB report, campaigning if the recommendation is unacceptable and finally supporting preparation for the 2018/19 PRB evidence.

NHS pay is seen as a 'marker' for nurses pay overall and rises in the NHS rate we will expect to feed through to nurses working in the independent and private sector.

Other work will be the consideration of any new proposals for NHS exit payments .