



Royal College
of Nursing



Guidance for Voting Members

As a voting member at Congress, you'll be representing up to 1,000 of your colleagues at the most important agenda-setting event in the RCN's calendar. If you've not voted before, here's a quick best-practice guide of what to do, and what to expect.



Before Congress

Familiarise yourself with the whole agenda which will be available on the Congress website in early February.

Read the background information. Available online around six weeks before Congress, this information gives an unbiased, four-country perspective of the issue being debated. This information will also be printed in your *Congress Guide*, available when you arrive at Congress.

Talk to the members of the group you're representing. Find out the views and feelings of your branch, forum or representative committee.

Contact the other voting members from your branch, forum or committee and agree your voting strategy.

Don't get caught out! It's crucial that you're familiar with the whole agenda, as Congress can decide to change the order of debates during the event itself. This is to ensure Congress always reflects the most important issues of the day, and to make time for Emergency Resolutions to be debated.

Voting members are funded to attend Congress. That means we will pay for your travel to and from Congress and, for the days which you are voting, we will book and pay for your accommodation, provide you with a voucher towards the cost of your lunch and pay for incidental expenses (in line with the RCN Expenses policy). We will also pay for your meals at Congress evening social events.

At Congress

Find your seat! There are areas set aside for all voting members, and there will be seating plans in your *Congress Guide*, and RCN staff available at the venue to help you find the correct seat. The delegate pack you receive in the weeks leading up to Congress will contain your voting cards. The Vice Chair of Congress will let you know when it's time to vote.

Hands up! Most votes are carried out this way. You will be asked to hold up the relevant 'For', 'Against' or 'Abstain' cards found in your delegate pack. To ensure all voting members feel comfortable voting whatever their view, all cards will be shown at the same time, and a quick count will take place.

X marks the spot. Occasionally, votes will take place using the session-specific cards from your delegate pack. Mark your choice (For, Against, or Abstain) on the card and post it into one of the boxes which will be passed around. Counting is done by members of the RCN's Governance team. Should this type of vote be called, you will be given very clear instructions from the stage.

Your responsibilities. Voting members are expected to be in the hall at all times on the days they are funded to vote. That also includes attendance at the RCN AGM if that falls on a day on which you have been funded to attend.

Speak up!

Speaking at Congress is a fantastic opportunity to get your voice heard, and it's crucial for a good debate for as many views as possible to be heard. So don't be shy! Walking to the podium for the first time can be a daunting experience, but you'll soon discover that everyone who takes to the microphone for the first time - especially first time speakers - receives a very warm welcome.

After Congress



Share your experiences with other members of your branch, forum or representative committee – for example, attend a branch committee meeting and talk about the issues raised in the debates.