



TOP TIPS FOR NEW STUDENTS	P10
CAMPAIGN FOR SAFE STAFFING	P12
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FOR NURSING STUDENTS ACROSS THE UK

AUTUMN/WINTER 2019



# FAIR CARE FOR EVERYONE

STUDENT NURSE BROOKE AND HER PARTNER DAN ARE SPEAKING UP FOR TRANSGENDER PATIENTS

# the People's People

When we're going to bed, Sam has already started her night shift. She'll bring comfort, relieve pain, fight infection and make her patients feel that little bit less scared. She's a people person.

But her shift will also be chronically understaffed.  
Patients waiting in corridors, care left undone.

Nurses are the People's People. And now we need to fight for them.

England is missing more than 40,000 nurses.  
Tell the government to fix it. Sign our petition today at

[rcn.org.uk/peoplespeople-magazines](https://rcn.org.uk/peoplespeople-magazines)



#safestaffingsaveslives

Cut out and put up in your university if you're in England

## WELCOME

3



Training to be a nurse is exciting and rewarding but it's also very challenging. During your time as a student you should always feel like you are learning, are valued and have access to support should you need it.

That's why the RCN Students Committee's top priority is your health and wellbeing; we will be exploring ways to best support you throughout your time as a student, both on placement and at university, as well as while making the all-important transition to being a newly qualified nurse (NQN).

For now, we have some helpful advice for new students and NQNs on pages 10-11. And don't forget, as an RCN member you also have access to a whole host of free support services, from online library training to career advice and counselling: [rcn.org.uk/mss](https://rcn.org.uk/mss)

We're working hard on our safe staffing campaign, which includes lobbying the UK governments to better financially support nursing students. We are, after all, the future of nursing.

Read more on pages 12-13 and add your voice to the campaign by signing our petition (see advert opposite). We can make a change if we all work together.

**Amy Fancourt**  
Student Member of RCN Council

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### Story to tell?

If you've got a story to share, or there's a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue, why not get in touch? Email [studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk](mailto:studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk)

Did you know *RCN Students* is online? Read unmissable student stories, advice and guidance on the go, anywhere, at any time. And it's not just *RCN Students*, all our member magazines are there too – including *RCN Bulletin*. Visit [rcn.org.uk/magazines](https://rcn.org.uk/magazines)

### RCN Direct

If you need RCN help or advice, please call RCN Direct on **0345 772 6100** (or **00 44 20 7647 3456** from overseas). Lines are open 8.30am-8.30pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Get help online at [rcn.org.uk/get-help](https://rcn.org.uk/get-help)

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## Will the government #FundOurFuture?

Rumours have been circulating that the UK Government is gearing up to introduce a new deal for nursing students in England in an attempt to boost the number of applications to nursing degree courses.

With speculation building about what these new incentives for nursing students might look like, here's a reminder of the options the RCN proposed:

- a tuition fee grant and means-tested maintenance grant
- a forgivable loan system plus a non-means-tested grant.

In the economic modelling we commissioned, we showed that if the UK Government invested at least £1bn a year back into nursing higher education it could result in an extra 24,000 new nurses in five years.



With the final NHS People Plan due to be published at the end of the year, the UK Government has a real opportunity to start to address the nursing workforce crisis and put in place financial incentives to see a real rise in numbers ahead of the next academic year.

Whatever the government proposes, we are clear that it must include financial support for all nursing students and be an improvement on the old bursary system in England.

Find out more at [rcn.org.uk/fundourfuture](https://rcn.org.uk/fundourfuture)

## Going green



You can now choose how you receive your copy of *RCN Students* magazine.

Simply login at [rcn.org.uk/myrcn](https://rcn.org.uk/myrcn) to tell us if you'd prefer to receive your copy in the post or by email.

If you'd like to receive RCN Students by email only then make sure to also check that you have chosen to receive emails from the RCN in your overall preferences.

## Help protect patients this winter

The RCN is running its #BeatTheFlu campaign to encourage all frontline nursing staff and students to get the flu vaccine. It is one of the safest and easiest ways of protecting you, your colleagues and your patients.

Find out more at [rcn.org.uk/beat-the-flu](https://rcn.org.uk/beat-the-flu)



## Represent the RCN at your university



The RCN's student information officer (SIO) role is undergoing an exciting redevelopment. As part of the project's first phase, the role's new name and description were revealed at the recent SIO conference in Cardiff.

Now called the RCN student ambassador role, it will consist of three main areas: signposting and supporting; connecting and campaigning;

and questioning and influencing. More details on these to come.

If you're a nursing student who is passionate about nursing, wants to make a difference, has energy and enthusiasm and is keen to become active within the RCN then visit [rcn.org.uk/student-ambassadors](https://rcn.org.uk/student-ambassadors) to find out more and apply to become an RCN student ambassador.

## Doing your dissertation?

Trying to find the right articles and evidence can be tough and sometimes searching databases such as CINAHL and British Nursing Index can feel daunting. The RCN can help. You can organise 1:1 Skype sessions with

our specialist librarians – or pop into one of our libraries in person – for helpful guidance on how to search nursing literature effectively and find the articles you need. Visit [rcn.org.uk/lib-training](https://rcn.org.uk/lib-training) to find out more.

### What I'm thinking...



**Brittany McArthur**  
Newly qualified adult nurse

I was recently filmed singing one of my patient's favourite hymns with her and the video went viral! But for me it was just a normal shift as I always try to keep a person-centred approach in my nursing. Normally when an individual comes into contact with a nurse it is at a vulnerable time in their life. They don't just need to receive medical care but also to be treated with kindness, respect and dignity.

I try to do little additional things to make the people in my care feel more comfortable: providing a listening ear, giving a patient with dementia their favourite drink to encourage fluid intake, or singing with them. I find music especially can have a very positive effect, often bringing back comforting memories. These simple gestures often matter most to someone.

The thing I always keep in the back of my mind is: "How would I like to be treated if it was me needing this care? Or how would I want my family member treated?" This really keeps person-centred care in perspective for me.

Watch the video: [tinyurl.com/brittanysings](https://tinyurl.com/brittanysings)

# Fair care for everyone

Student nurse Brooke and her partner Dan are sharing their own experiences to speak up for transgender patients



During my first year studying nursing at Derby University I went to a lecture about protected characteristics. Some students had questions about treating transgender patients and, while my lecturer is fantastic and offered the best answers he could, he hadn't actually had any transgender patients so lacked real-life experience.

After the lecture I spoke to him about my partner Dan, who at that point was two years into his transition.

I suggested that Dan's lived experiences could be beneficial for my cohort to learn from. My lecturer was really enthusiastic about this and we set a date for our first ever talk about transgender patient care, which has since been followed by many more.

### A topic for everyone

Talking about LGBTQ+ rights (whether you fit in to this group or not) is so important. The world has changed a lot from when daily prejudice was

experienced back in the 50s, but discrimination is still very much an issue.

This unfortunately includes the world of health care. Dan and I have heard countless stories of staff misgendering patients (using the wrong pronouns) and refusing or making treatment difficult.

### A question of health

Being with Dan has shown me how hard some people have to fight to be heard and accepted for who they are. And we have learned together that navigating the NHS when you are transgender can be really tough.

And that's not only concerning treatment related to transitioning. Transgender patients may need to access health care for any number of reasons. And there may be extra sensitivities surrounding these.

For example, transgender men may never be invited for cervical screenings, and similarly transgender women may never have had a prostate exam. These examinations can be lifesaving but are often overlooked.

When transgender patients do undergo such exams, this can cause quite dysphoric thoughts and can have an effect on mental health so an understanding of this and a sensitive approach is vital.

If transgender patients feel as though they are being judged or discriminated against when they access health care then they will be put off seeking help when they need it.

### Opening up the conversation

Giving talks with Dan on transgender care helped me recognise that my voice is important and my experience can empower other staff members. I was recently on a shift and overheard two experienced nurses discussing

transgender people and expressing some common misconceptions. Instead of being the nervous student nurse and hiding away as I might once have done, I pulled up a chair and joined the conversation. We discussed the discrimination transgender people still face today and how we could all better improve our practice to be allies of the LGBTQ+ community.

One of the most amazing things about nursing is that we never stop learning and we're constantly challenged to grow and rethink our perceptions. As student nurses, we are a crucial part of the conversation and should always speak up to help promote inclusivity and patient-centred wellbeing for every patient.



We should always speak up to help promote inclusivity and patient-centred wellbeing

🕒 The RCN has published guidance to help nursing staff provide fair care for transgender people. Visit [tinyurl.com/fairtranscare](https://tinyurl.com/fairtranscare)

## Brooke urges health care staff to use the six Cs for every patient

**Care** – Although transgender patients are often advised to ensure they have a thorough understanding of their own care and medications they will likely still have worries and concerns. Take the time to explain and allow for questions that may arise due to their gender identity.

**Compassion** – Transitioning can take years, so have compassion and understand that your patient may be going through an emotional roller-coaster.

**Competence** – I would urge you to only initiate conversations that you feel competent to take part in. It is OK to say that you don't know about something and need to learn more.

**Communication** – We must take the time to talk and listen to our patients. Although someone's preferred pronoun may not align with what you consider "normal" for a specific gender, they must be self-defined and respected.

**Courage** – It takes courage to be an advocate for your transgender patient. This can range from creating a safe space to potentially challenging others' negative preconceptions.

**Commitment** – By committing to being an LGBTQ+ ally, you can make a huge difference. Your voice as a respected health professional can change people's perspectives more widely.

# Safeguarding children: how to identify and escalate concerns

Senior lecturer Zoe Clarke explains how to spot the signs of neglect, maltreatment and abuse and raise concerns to keep children safe



Safeguarding is the responsibility of all individuals who have contact with children and young people, including professionals from health, schools and the wider community.

This means it is also the responsibility of student nurses across all fields of nursing.

But what is safeguarding exactly? The NSPCC defines it as the process of protecting children and young people from harm and allowing

them to live a life free from abuse, neglect and maltreatment.

It aims to ensure all children and young people are able to grow and develop in a safe environment and to have the best possible life outcomes.

The main types of abuse include physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect. Read more about what these could consist of at *RCN Students* online: [rcn.org.uk/studentmag](http://rcn.org.uk/studentmag)

## What are the signs of abuse?

- Being withdrawn or reluctant to communicate.
- Sudden change in behaviour.
- Low self-esteem in older children and young people.
- Bruising and/or injury in unexpected places.
- Attention-seeking behaviour with strangers.
- Looking unclean or wearing clothing inappropriate for the weather.
- Hunger.
- Demonstrating overly sexualised behaviour.
- Urine tract infections can be a sign of sexual abuse in girls.
- Mismatch of injury to explanation given.
- Persistent absence from education.
- Missing health-related appointments or routine check-ups.

READ MORE  
ONLINE  
[rcn.org.uk/  
studentmag](http://rcn.org.uk/studentmag)

## How should I report suspected abuse?

If you have concerns as a student nurse, you should report these to a qualified member of staff as soon as possible. Who this is will depend on the setting you are working in.

A discussion will then take place in relation to risk of immediate harm. If this is suspected, social services or the police will be alerted. If immediate harm is not deemed a risk then a referral is made to social services who will conduct an initial assessment.

You may be asked to participate in enquiries and to provide a statement if you have witnessed something which may be of use in the investigation. Your employer should be able to guide you on this and RCN support services can offer advice and guidance as well: [rcn.org.uk/get-help/rcn-advice/statements](http://rcn.org.uk/get-help/rcn-advice/statements)

It may feel difficult to speak up, or you may lack the confidence to identify children and young people at risk but just remember

that it is always better to say something if you have even the slightest concern as it could make all the difference for that child.

If you raise concerns but don't feel they have been taken on board or escalated appropriately, make sure you speak to your university tutor or lecturer and let them know the situation.

You can also contact RCN Direct for further support and advice: **0345 772 6100**.

## Find out more

To increase your knowledge in this area, try and attend safeguarding meetings where possible when on placement. If a child is subject to a child protection plan, ask permission to attend the meetings and become familiar with the inter-professional practice.

Reading around the topic of safeguarding is invaluable to develop both knowledge and competence. The RCN's webpages for safeguarding are a great starting point: [rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/safeguarding](http://rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/safeguarding)

## ...for new students

Third-year adult nursing student Jess Sainsbury gives some advice on how to navigate being a new student nurse

### 1 Be kind to yourself

As a student nurse, being kind and caring towards others is incredibly valuable. But you need to treat yourself with the same compassion. You'll learn more efficiently and take better care of your patients if you're looking after your own health and wellbeing. Everyone has moments of fear and self-doubt when entering university, but you were accepted onto the course because you have the makings of a great nurse. Remember this and believe in yourself.

### 2 Find your nursing family

Starting your course is a great way to meet like-minded people and a strong support network is vital: for the good and the tough times. Surround yourself with people you can rely on and who are championing your success. Joining your university's nursing society and following key

accounts on Twitter (such as @RCNStudents) are good places to start. But don't worry if you didn't make a new best friend on your first day! Just relax, be yourself and enjoy meeting other nursing students.

### 3 Be prepared but take it slow

As soon as you get your reading lists, get ahead of the game. Doing little and often is much better than doing things stressed and in a rush. But don't try and learn everything at once. Instead, focus on one topic for a few days, looking at patient case notes, investigations, care plans and link what you've learnt in theory to practice. And remember: no question is a stupid question. You're here to learn, so always ask questions.

### 4 Use some practical magic

From day one, you'll be juggling many balls. Get yourself a diary or a calendar app and use it to keep track

of placements, lectures and deadlines – schedule time for relaxation and socialising too. Carry this and your notebook everywhere, and always have a few pens in your bag so you can jot down reflections or things you want to research later. Invest in practical footwear too. Buy the comfiest shoes you can find – even if they're the ugliest! You'll spend the majority of your placement on your feet so it's worthwhile.

### 5 Make the most of your RCN membership

As an RCN member you have access to lots of invaluable services and support: the RCN libraries and eLibrary, placement support, counselling, career advice and development, and the online student money guide. And you even get discounts on top brands and 50% off cinema tickets through RCNXtra! Visit [rcn.org.uk/membership/student-members](http://rcn.org.uk/membership/student-members) to find out more.

## ...for newly qualified nurses

We asked NQNs from each specialty to share their top tips for choosing and surviving your first role as a registered nurse

### 1 There's no perfect first job

Many students put pressure on themselves to find the "perfect" first job. The truth is, no job is perfect and you may not yet know what kind of role will be the best fit for you. But that's OK. Whichever role you choose, this is just the start of your career. You'll have a chance to grow in your first job, continuing to learn and discovering new interests all the time. Joining the NMC register isn't the end of the journey, it's just the beginning.

### 2 Choose your challenge

Many people will have to make the call between staying in the trust they trained in or moving elsewhere. Staying somewhere familiar means you'll have an existing support network and won't have the added stress of getting to know new colleagues and buildings. But moving somewhere new offers a fresh start, where

people know you as a nurse, not a student, and you may encounter exciting new challenges. Each option has its advantages so try to look objectively at where offers you the best environment to learn and grow.

### 3 Ask for help

Get ready to take on more responsibility. You'll no longer be under supervision and people will expect you to make decisions and get things done. But just because you're no longer a student doesn't mean you're not supported. It's easy to put pressure on yourself or feel you need to handle everything alone, but every nurse is part of a team and it's always better to ask for help when you need it.

### 4 Never stop learning

Nursing is always growing and changing. As patient care advances, health care environments change and nursing roles expand,

there will always be new challenges. It's good to remember this as an NQN: you don't know everything, but neither does anyone else. However, you will be surrounded by experienced and interesting colleagues who you can learn from.

### 5 Stay true to yourself

It can be tough to raise issues as a newly qualified member of the team – you may feel it's not your place or worry about the reaction. But it's important to remain true to your convictions and know that you have every right to voice concerns.

### 6 Remember why you're here

Nursing can be a wonderful, rewarding profession, but it isn't an easy one. Amid any difficulties though, the reasons you decided to become a nurse are still there. Remind yourself of these regularly, especially on the harder days.

# Fighting for your future

As student nurses, you are the next generation of the nursing workforce. Add your voice to our safe staffing campaign today



We know the most important thing to you, and all nursing staff, is being able to provide the care needed by your patients. Right now, that's being hindered by the nursing workforce crisis. There are tens of thousands of nurse vacancies across the UK.

That's why we launched our safe staffing campaign, asking for the introduction of laws to ensure safe staffing in all four countries of the UK. Our campaigning differs in each country as each is at a different stage. Scotland and Wales already have laws, whereas England and Northern Ireland have some way to go.

No matter where you live in the UK, we want there to be

the right number of nursing staff with the right skills in the right places to provide safe and effective care in all health care settings.

Student members play a crucial part in this campaign, not least because one key element of what we're asking for is fair and sustained financial support for student nurses to secure the future supply of nursing staff.

Student members have been leading this call with our *#FundOurFuture* campaign asking the UK government to invest at least £1bn in nurse higher education in England. Now students are joining other RCN members to amplify the messages of the wider campaign.

## Grassroots campaigning

Sam Turner is just one student member who has been invaluable to campaign activities so far.

From designing twibbons and selfie boards to getting out to student events and adding names to our petition, he's been helping to spread the word far and wide. "I'm very passionate about this campaign and how important it is, not just for students or nursing staff but for everyone," says Sam.

"I was a nursing support worker before I became a student nurse so saw the impact first-hand of unsafe staffing levels without being supernumerary. Even so, as a student nurse, the reality of the situation still shocks me when I'm on placement. I'm the kind of person that when I see something isn't right and needs to change, I'll contribute in whatever way I can. I want to feel like I'm doing everything possible to make sure the future of the nursing workforce, of which I will be part, is safeguarded."

## How to get involved

### In England

**Sign our petition.** It only takes a minute to sign our online petition and add your voice to our campaign. Visit [rcn.org.uk/peoplespeople-magazines](https://rcn.org.uk/peoplespeople-magazines) to join thousands of others who've already signed.

**Become an e-campaigner.** Sign up at [rcn.org.uk/safestaffing/england](https://rcn.org.uk/safestaffing/england) and receive a monthly email with a quick and easy online action to take.

**Contact your local branch or talk to an RCN student ambassador.** Each region will be organising its own campaign events and will be able to advise you on how best to get involved and use your voice to make a difference.

**Contact your MP.** The more people who do this, the more effective our message will be. Visit [tinyurl.com/persuadingpoliticians](https://tinyurl.com/persuadingpoliticians) for student Amy's top tips on this.

### In Northern Ireland

We've just closed a ballot of members working in Health and Social Care (HSC) services on industrial action, up to and including strike action, in relation to the nurse staffing and pay crisis. Find out more at [rcn.org.uk/safestaffing/ni](https://rcn.org.uk/safestaffing/ni) and sign our petition at [tinyurl.com/rcn-ni-petition](https://tinyurl.com/rcn-ni-petition)

### In Scotland

Find out more about the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act and get involved in our campaigning to get it effectively implemented at [rcn.org.uk/safestaffing/scotland](https://rcn.org.uk/safestaffing/scotland)

### In Wales

Find out more about the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act and how you can get involved in campaigning to get it extended at [rcn.org.uk/safestaffing/wales](https://rcn.org.uk/safestaffing/wales)

## What do we want?

### Accountability

We want it to be clear whose job it is to make sure there are enough nursing staff, with the right skill mix, to meet patients' needs.

### Strategy

We want a vision for tackling nurse shortages and making sure nursing helps meet the whole of the UK's health needs.

### Plans

We want clear plans for getting the right numbers and skill mix of nursing staff and we want checks to make sure they really happen.

### Education

We want governments to educate enough nursing students, and develop existing staff, to meet patients' needs.

# Do you know how to detect delirium?

As the RCN seeks to increase awareness of this confusional state, lecturer Gary has developed training for students at his university

Delirium is a common yet under-recognised medical condition that can have serious or even life-threatening consequences. Health care professionals play a key role in its early identification and management, but research suggests a lack of confidence, knowledge and skills means it can often go undetected.

In response to this, the RCN launched *Don't Discount Delirium*, an online hub providing information and resources to help nursing staff increase their knowledge of the condition and support them to become delirium champions in their workplace.

### Student training

But it isn't only registered nurses who can benefit from increased education surrounding the recognition and treatment of delirium, students can too.

Last year, Dr Gary Mitchell, a lecturer from the School of Nursing and Midwifery at

Queen's University Belfast, collaborated with the RCN to design a two-hour, face-to-face learning package for first-year nursing students.

Gary says: "Despite delirium becoming a growing global health care concern, it is frequently under-diagnosed. This is particularly concerning as delirium is a symptom of acute illness that is often avoidable and reversible if detected early enough."

### Becoming a delirium champion

The resulting workshop was delivered earlier this year to groups of 15-20 students at a time.

The four core elements of delirium education covered were: defining delirium, recognising delirium, managing delirium, and reflection on practice.

"The aim was to give students an introduction to the knowledge and tools they need to detect and manage delirium and to empower



them to become delirium champions when they're on placements," says Gary.

Students gave positive feedback after attending the workshop and said they felt significantly more confident in providing care to someone with delirium and discussing delirium with a patient's family.

To date, 800 nursing students at Queen's University Belfast have become "delirium champions". Due to its success, this training has now been embedded within the university's nursing curriculum.

### Second-year Queen's University student Kerry Canavan reflects on what she learnt about delirium and how it's affected her practice

My knowledge of delirium before this workshop was severely lacking. I had heard it mentioned in practice but with limited explanation. This training helped it all to click.

I haven't yet had to consider delirium for a patient on placement since then, but I have had a more personal experience with it. I was working on a bank shift as domestic staff in the hospital where my grandad was receiving post-operative care. When I went to see him, he appeared confused and didn't seem to know who I was or why I was there.

Initially, I thought that might have been because I was in uniform but remembering what I'd learnt about delirium, I stopped to think twice. My instinct told me this wasn't normal, especially as I'd only seen him recently. So I spoke to the nurses in charge about whether it could possibly be delirium.

Fortunately, my grandad's disorientation was due to lack of sleep in this case and he has recovered well. But this experience made me realise how important it is to be aware of delirium and not to discount symptoms.

Also, it's made me realise the importance of asking a patient's friends and family to let us know if they are acting unusually. They know them better than anyone and it can help speed up the care these patients receive, which I now know is vital in the management of delirium.

From now on if I come across a patient who seems to be behaving out of character and displaying possible symptoms, I will always think delirium.



I know how important it is to be aware of delirium and not discount symptoms

Visit the RCN *Don't Discount Delirium* pages: [tinyurl.com/deliriumchampion](https://tinyurl.com/deliriumchampion)

### How to spot the signs of delirium

An acute confusional state that has a sudden onset, delirium is often mistaken for symptoms of dementia or simply old age and can sometimes go untreated for long periods of time. Know how to spot the signs by looking out for:

				FUNCTION
<b>AROUSAL (AWAKENESS)</b>	<b>THINKING</b>	<b>PERCEPTION</b>	<b>BEHAVIOUR</b>	<b>Less mobility</b>
More sleepy than usual	Poor concentration	Seeing things	Refusing to co-operate	Less movement
More alert or active than usual	Slow responses	Hearing things	Withdrawn	Restless/agitated
Hard to wake up	More confused	Paranoid	Change in attitude	Not eating
			Change in communication	Sleep problems

# Getting through the second-year blues

Toni shares her struggles during this challenging stage of her nursing degree and how she moved past them with a little help

I started second year on a high. But then the pressures began to mount and it began to feel like the year – and my degree – were never going to end. I came down to earth with a massive bump.

October came and I couldn't see how I would make it to Christmas with all the work I had to complete. I had a number of assignments all due within weeks of each other and I didn't know when I was going to find the time to complete them.

## Shutting off

I was struggling to work around my placements and finances were constantly on my mind. Every day felt as though I was walking through cement and I couldn't see a way out. I became distant, stopped replying to friends and didn't talk to anyone



all the work I had to do once it was written down that I didn't want to face it. Instead I would sit at home staring into space.

I was constantly stressed and my behaviour became extreme; I was eating nothing or everything, either sleeping just for a couple of hours or all day. I started drinking, not to excess, but every night.

I continuously put off starting my uni work because the amount of it felt like a huge weight on me. I know that starting it would have been the best way to alleviate the load but the more it built up, the more it felt insurmountable.

I considered leaving university more than once because I just didn't know how I would complete the work. I left a

unless I absolutely had to. I even stayed away from social media (a sure-fire sign there is something wrong with me!). I just played it down as "having a lot on" and became good at pretending I was coping.

I made to-do lists every day and binned them. I just became so overwhelmed with

4,000-word assignment until two weeks before the due date and received my worst grade to date. I was messing up my own degree and, at that point, felt like I didn't care. I was numb to everything, like I no longer had any emotions.

## Seeking help

This may sound dramatic but it's an honest account of how I felt. I want to share this so that other people who may be struggling can see they're not the only ones – and that

there is also hope. The turning point that changed everything for me was reaching out to someone.

I eventually admitted to myself I needed help and went to see my GP. All it took was having one person to listen to me and understand to make me see I wasn't losing my mind and that I needed support.

I'm in my third year now and, although I wouldn't say I'm 100%, I've managed to get back on top of things. I'm excited again about my future as a nurse.



Every day felt as though I was walking through cement

## My tips for other students who are struggling

### Reach out

It doesn't matter to whom, just talk to someone. Even if you don't want to discuss it fully, just letting someone know you aren't feeling great can make a real difference.

### Take one day at a time

I was looking months in advance and it was scaring me. I started concentrating on what I needed to do in the next 24 hours and it really helped to focus my mind and stop me feeling overwhelmed.

### Little and often

One hour a day on your work is better than nothing. I forced myself to spend one hour a day working and soon I was spending longer because I was over the initial hurdle.

### Take time for yourself

If you need a day in bed, take it. If you need to turn your phone off, do it. Don't feel guilty for not replying or cancelling plans.

### Organise social events

Having something to look forward to really helped to push me through the days when I didn't want to get out of bed.



**Want to talk?** Make an appointment with the RCN's free counselling service on **0345 772 6100**.

## What we're working on

Hi, it's Craig bringing you the committee round-up as Chair for the last time. My two years on the committee have truly helped shape my nursing journey. From witnessing your passionate activism in our campaigning to helping plan events to improve your student nursing experience, it has been my privilege to work with and be inspired by nursing students from across the UK. I cannot advocate getting involved with the RCN enough. The RCN is you, its members, and your voice counts!

### Committee priorities 2020

Our key aims for next year are to support and encourage students to prioritise their mental and physical health so that they in turn can provide the highest standards of nursing care; to campaign for staffing for safe and effective care and proper funding and support for nursing students; to encourage students to demand excellent education and practice experience; and to be truly representative of the student voice.

### Students' debate

We held our public debate on 8 October in Belfast and online where we discussed whether the "national" should be put back in the National Health Service. The motion was passed, with 75% agreeing we should take a four-nation approach to the NHS in order to tackle health inequality and access to health care. Plans are already underway for next year's debate, so watch this space!

### SIO conference

We held our second annual RCN UK student information officer (SIO) Conference in Cardiff on 7 November, *Courageous about Diversity, Bold about Inclusion*. The day included advice on how to use the RCN's inclusion strategy; an interactive hidden disabilities session; a facilitated conversation with a panel of inclusion experts; and a mini Congress. We collected the agenda items

from the mini Congress and will submit these as potential agenda items for the main RCN Congress in Liverpool next year, ensuring the student voice is heard loud and clear!

### Campaigning

We continue to ask students from across all four nations to support our English colleagues to achieve fair and sustainable funding with *#FundourFuture*. The campaign has been gaining parliamentary traction and is also a crucial part of our safe staffing campaign. Read more on page 12.

### Congress 2020

We are beginning work with key stakeholders to develop a charter for higher education institutes and practice placements to sign up to, which will allow students to be accredited clinical placement hours for extracurricular activities, such as RCN Congress. Ask at your local branch for details on student funding to attend Congress or apply online to become a voting member: [tinyurl.com/votingmember](https://tinyurl.com/votingmember) (deadline 29 November).



Visit [rcn.org.uk/elections](https://rcn.org.uk/elections) for latest elections information

Committee elections for the Eastern and South West regions, and Scotland, will open on 11 November. Look out for an email from [vote@ukevote.uk](mailto:vote@ukevote.uk) which will provide a link straight to the voting website.

## Your RCN Students Committee

### Representing you



**Craig Davidson (Chair)**  
Scotland



**Amy Fancourt**  
Student member of RCN Council



**Lucy Mason**  
Professional Nursing Committee member



**Clare Manley**  
Trade Union Committee member

### Country and regional representatives



**Laura Bird**  
Eastern



**Kelly Hitchcock**  
East Midlands



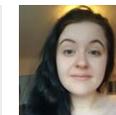
**Harriet Bailey**  
London



**Lyndsey Curtis-Dawson**  
Northern



**Mark Lavery**  
Northern Ireland



**Carolyn Brown**  
Northern Ireland



**Sam Turner**  
North West



**Dawn Keating**  
Scotland



**Jess Sainsbury (Vice Chair)**  
South East



**Jodie Ashford**  
South West



**Alice Duncan**  
Wales



**Duncan Warren**  
Wales



**Vacant**  
West Midlands



**Olatunde George**  
Yorkshire & the Humber

### What does the committee do?

The RCN Students Committee is led by students for students, and makes the student voice heard on the issues that matter to you. The committee reports directly to RCN Council – the RCN's governing body, which provides leadership and direction for the organisation, helping to shape the future.



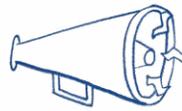
### Get in touch

Contact your student committee representative at [students@rcn.org.uk](mailto:students@rcn.org.uk)

If undelivered please return to: RCN Direct, Copse Walk, Cardiff Gate Business Park, Cardiff, CF23 8XG

# What does the RCN mean to you?

“



The RCN is one voice together ”

“



The RCN is professional, supportive and listened to ”

“



The RCN is an excellent, professional organisation ”

“



The RCN is my nursing family ”

“



The RCN provides mentorship and learning ”

“



The RCN is a friend when you're in need ”

“



The RCN is there to support nursing staff ”

“



The RCN provides a range of resources to help you throughout your career ”

“



The RCN is its members ”

“



The RCN provides the opportunity to be part of what is possible ”

## Get involved and together we can achieve more

We've created a film with members explaining what services the RCN offers and what it means to be a member of the RCN.

It highlights all the ways you can get involved with the College and how, by working together, we can achieve more. Watch the film at [rcn.org.uk/students-involved-video](http://rcn.org.uk/students-involved-video) and read more about how to get involved at [rcn.org.uk/get-involved](http://rcn.org.uk/get-involved)

