

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

6 September 2021

- 1 The Board received an extensive verbal update from its Pay and Safe and Effective Care Campaign Sub-Committee. This highlighted the recent announcement by the Minister for Health of his intention to implement a 3% Agenda for Change pay award for 2021-2022 and the associated need to seek additional funding for the award via the Northern Ireland Executive October monitoring round, with the intention that the award and arrears would be paid as from November 2021. The update referenced the emergency meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 19 August 2021, at which a range of political influencing activity in relation to this announcement was agreed. As a consequence, the Board Chair and the Acting Director have now written to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, the letter also having been copied to the Minister for Health, requesting that decisions related to the October monitoring round are expedited in the interests of securing an earlier resolution of the pay award issue. The Board Chair and Acting Director have also written to all 18 Northern Ireland MPs asking them to use their influence at Westminster to highlight the negative consequences for Northern Ireland of the failure by the UK government to fully fund the pay award in England. Finally, the Board Chair and Acting Director have written to the Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Health requesting a meeting to discuss pay, safe staffing and attacks on nursing staff. A response has been received from the First Minister and Deputy First Minister; this is now being followed up as a matter of urgency. The Board also agreed the need to prioritise calls for band 5 - band 6 pay progression implementation and the urgent development of an HSC retention strategy for nursing staff within the context of the pay campaign.
- 2 The Board received and noted a series of activity reports from the six RCN branches in Northern Ireland that included details of local pay campaign activity organised and delivered within the RCN Summer of Action initiative.
- 3 The Board received, noted and discussed updates on the work of the RCN Trade Union Committee and the RCN Professional Nursing Committee. In relation to the latter, the Board discussed the protection of title and 'long Covid'.
- 4 The Acting Director provided an update on work related to the RCN's 'Big Five' priorities, comprising pay, safe staffing, organising and transformation, the independent sector, and learning and development.
- 5 The Board also discussed concerns at the recent announcement of the resignation of the Chief Nursing Officer and highlighted the continuing need for strong and visible nursing leadership in Northern Ireland.

- 6 In relation to the recent announcement of [an independent review of organisational culture within the RCN](#), Board members emphasised that the work of the RCN in Northern Ireland will remain fully focused on delivering for members, particularly in relation to the 'Big Five' priorities noted above.
- 7 The Board received a brief verbal update on the current RCN Northern Ireland office closure and the work of the RCN Property Review Task and Finish Group. It was reiterated that 17 Windsor Avenue will be fully re-opened for staff and member access as soon as this is permitted under Northern Ireland Executive guidance.
- 8 The Board also received a further update on recent developments related to the investigation of allegations of the abuse of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital, which are now the subject of a statutory public inquiry.
- 9 A verbal report was received and noted on the work of the RCN UK independent sector strategy and in relation to the recent publication of an RCN report on the [experiences of Northern Ireland nurses during the pandemic](#).
- 10 The Board received, noted and approved an operational plan update, a revised RCN Northern Ireland risk register, and the latest quarterly performance management report covering the second quarter of 2021.
- 11 The Board received an update on arrangements for [RCN Congress 2021](#). It was noted, as previously announced, that the event will now be held entirely online.
- 12 Following the Board meeting, a development session was held on risk management.
- 13 The next meeting of the RCN Northern Ireland Board will take place on Monday 6 December 2021.