

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

21 February 2022

- 1 The Board Chair welcomed Loretta Gribben to the meeting following her recent appointment as Associate Director, Nursing Policy and Practice.
- 2 The Board agreed to seek a meeting with RCN Fellows in Northern Ireland in order to discuss and agree ways of working, current priorities and enhanced communication.
- 3 The Board received and discussed an updated and reviewed RCN Northern Ireland risk register, a performance management highlights report for the final quarter of 2021, an associated assurance framework, and an operational plan for 2022. The Board noted the revised formats for the presentation of the risk register and performance management highlights report, commending the enhanced assurance that these provide to the Board. The operational plan derives from and builds upon the priorities set out in the corresponding RCN UK operational plan, Our 2022 Ambition. This focuses upon amplifying the voice of nursing, achieving cultural change and staff enablement, and enhancing the RCN's member offer and services.
- 4 The Board Chair provided verbal updates to Board members on the [Carr Review of the culture of the RCN](#), which is due to report before the end of March 2022, and the KPMG review of RCN governance structures, which is also due to report shortly.
- 5 The Board received and discussed reports from the six RCN branches in Northern Ireland covering the final quarter of 2021. The various issues raised by the branches were noted and the Board will ensure that they are appropriately addressed. The Board also received and noted the branch plans for 2022. Further to this, the Board discussed and agreed additional ways to enhance communication with the branches.
- 6 The Board Chair provided a verbal update on Board development. It was noted that a political influencing workshop for Board members will be held on Monday 7 March 2022, focusing in particular on the forthcoming Northern Ireland Assembly elections.

- 7 A verbal update was received on developments related to the allegations of the abuse of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital, including the related public inquiry.
- 8 The Board received and discussed a verbal briefing on the recent consultative ballot of RCN members in Northern Ireland over the 3% Agenda for Change pay award in Northern Ireland for 2021-2022. This briefing noted the emphatic result of the ballot and the excellent turnout, which the Board agreed has provided a strong member mandate for further action. The Board also noted the additional non-consolidated award for 2021-2022 subsequently announced by the Minister for Health. Following an extensive discussion and consideration of the current political climate in Northern Ireland, the Board agreed to the development of a paper setting out options for a way forward in relation to pay. This will be discussed at an extraordinary meeting of the RCN Northern Ireland Board to be held no later than the end of March 2022.
- 9 The Board received a report on the allocation of funded places for the attendance of voting RCN members from Northern Ireland at RCN Congress 2022, which will be held in Glasgow from 5 to 9 June. The Board also discussed options for the allocation of discretionary funding to facilitate member attendance at Congress. It was agreed to support 14 non-voting members to be selected by the RCN branches in Northern Ireland, with an additional three non-voting first-time attendees to be selected according to criteria that will be determined by the RCN Northern Ireland Board. This information will be shared with members through a targeted social media campaign.
- 10 The Board discussed and agreed ways to enhance engagement with health care assistant and nursing assistant members in Northern Ireland. The RCN Northern Ireland staff lead will continue to provide appropriate support and maintain links with the RCN UK Nursing Support Worker Committee. A scoping exercise will now be undertaken to assess and build upon the resources and support that the RCN offers to these members, including dedicated UK wide events; education, learning and development activity; the annual nursing support worker celebration day; specific social media networking and information-sharing; and the provision of online support, advice and engagement. This activity will be prioritised in light of a decision taken to stand down the RCN Northern Ireland Health Care Assistant Network.

- 11 The Board received a brief verbal update on the current RCN Northern Ireland office closure. It was reiterated that 17 Windsor Avenue will be fully re-opened for staff and member access as soon as this is facilitated under Northern Ireland Executive guidance. The Board also noted that RCN Council is currently developing a hybrid working model for staff and that this will seek to ensure consistency across the UK.
- 12 Following a verbal report on current policy consultation activity, the Board agreed to establish two task groups in order to support the development of RCN responses to consultations on [1] advance care planning and [2] the reform of adult social care.
- 13 The Board received and noted a verbal update on issues relating to the independent sector and practice nursing. It also received written updates on the work of the RCN Trade Union Committee, Professional Nursing Committee and Reps Committee.
- 14 Board members noted that the final deadline for the receipt of nominations for the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards is Friday 4 March 2022. The awards ceremony will be held at The Culloden Hotel on Thursday 16 June 2022.
- 15 Following the extraordinary meeting referenced at paragraph 8 above, the next quarterly RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting takes place on Monday 23 May 2022.