

RCN Northern Ireland Board Fair Pay and Safe Staffing Sub-Committee meeting 8 October 2021

Key messages: The RCN Northern Ireland Board Fair Pay and Safe Staffing Sub-Committee met on Friday 8 October 2021

- The Sub-Committee noted with concern that it has not yet been possible to arrange a meeting with the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister to discuss the Northern Ireland Executive October monitoring round and its implications for the 2021-2022 Agenda for Change pay award. It was noted that the RCN initially wrote to the Executive Office seeking a meeting on 3 September 2021. A holding response was received on 6 September 2021 stating that the request had been received and was under consideration. A further communication was sent by the RCN on 17 September 2021 by way of a reminder and a subsequent holding response was received reiterating that the meeting request was still under consideration. The RCN will continue to pursue all avenues in order to secure this meeting.
- The Sub-Committee noted and discussed issues related to the deployment of bank and agency nursing staff, noting the regional work in which the RCN is engaged in seeking to identify ways to reduce current levels of expenditure. The Sub-Committee also noted issues relating to access to enhanced Covid payments and emphasised that members experiencing difficulties should contact their local RCN trade union secretary in the first instance.
- The Sub-Committee noted the forthcoming review of the HSC pension scheme and the imminent consultation that will be conducted. The need for clear and concise information to inform members about the changes and their impact was emphasised.
- The Board Chair provided an update on the RCN #FairPayForNursing campaign across the UK. It was noted that an indicative ballot of members in England will open on 12 October 2021 and the RCN Wales Board is currently determining the next steps to be taken in Wales. In Scotland, a formal industrial dispute has been lodged by the RCN.
- The Sub-Committee discussed and noted the additional resourcing for staff and members that will be required to support membership engagement and organising in relation to a pay award in Northern Ireland.
- Dawn Elliott, the RCN UK Pay Programme Project Risk Officer, gave a presentation to the Sub-Committee on the development of a #FairPayForNursing risk register.
- The Sub-Committee received presentations on the communications and member engagement strategy that will be implemented once a pay award is announced in Northern Ireland, and the associated continuing political influencing activity. It was noted that the RCN will present oral and written evidence on pay and a range of nursing workforce issues to the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Health on Thursday 14 October 2021.
- The Sub-Committee highlighted the need for the RCN to develop a long-term pay strategy for 2022-2023 and beyond. It was noted that the NHS Pay Review Body recently met RCN members as part of a virtual visit to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust related to gathering evidence in preparation for its 2022-2023 report.
- The next meeting of the Sub-Committee will take place on Monday 8 November 2021. The RCN Northern Ireland Board will hold a development day on 18 October 2021 in order to agree the next steps for the Board in relation to pay and safe staffing.
- We encourage anyone who has any queries, comments, views or opinions to contact us via the monitored RCN Northern Ireland Board email address at ni.board@rcn.org.uk. Members should note that individual enquiries should not be raised via social media.