

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

20 February 2023

- 1 In her opening remarks, the Board Chair welcomed new Board members Linsey Sheerin, Simon Higgs, Perla Balmes and Kelly McConkey, following their recent election to Board membership. The Board Chair also thanked Maureen Dolan for her recent service as interim Board Chair and noted that this was the final Board meeting to be attended by Loretta Gribben, Associate Director, Nursing Policy and Practice. She thanked Loretta for her service to the RCN and its members.
- 2 The Board considered a detailed series of options for the continuation and potential escalation of the formal industrial dispute over the 2022-2023 pay award in Northern Ireland. After an extensive discussion, the Board agreed at this time to defer a decision on further strike action pending an assessment of the outcome of the RCN escalated strike action in England in early March. This decision has already been communicated to RCN members in Northern Ireland. The Board also agreed other measures to reinforce and demonstrate the commitment of RCN members to fair pay and safe staffing. Further information will be shared about this as soon as possible.
- 3 The Board received, noted and approved a series of governance assurance reports. These comprised the performance highlight report for the fourth quarter of 2022, an updated risk register, a final report on the delivery of the Board's operational plan for 2022, and a performance management report for the fourth quarter of 2022. A number of matters for clarification were raised by Board members and addressed.
- 4 The Board received a verbal update on arrangements for RCN Congress 2023, including the allocation of discretionary funding to support member attendance and the submission of Northern Ireland background evidence on the agenda items.
- 5 The Board received a verbal briefing on the various public inquiries in relation to health care issues in Northern Ireland. This briefing covered allegations of the abuse of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital, Southern Health and Social Care Trust urology services, neurology services in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the now concluded hyponatraemia public inquiry, and the UK Covid-19 public inquiry.
- 6 The Board welcomed Department of Health Chief Nursing Officer Maria McIlgorm, who provided a verbal briefing on her current priorities and then discussed with Board members a range of associated professional and workforce issues.
- 7 The Director provided a verbal update to Board members on the implementation of the recommendations of the independent [Carr Review of the culture of the RCN](#) and the [independent governance review](#) of the RCN. She also briefed Board members on issues related to the current independent review of the Public Health Agency.
- 8 The Board received, noted and approved the final quarter four progress reports on the 2022 RCN branch operational plans and approved the initial branch operational plans for 2023. A number of matters for clarification were raised and addressed.

- 9 The Board received verbal updates on current consultations to which RCN responses are being prepared, and on the independent sector and the position of nurses working in primary care. The Board also received and noted a detailed paper on the forthcoming introduction of the Prince of Wales Cadet Scheme in Northern Ireland.
- 10 The Board received and noted written reports on the work of the RCN Trade Union Committee, the RCN UK Professional Nursing Committee, the RCN UK Representatives Committees, RCN Council, and the RCN UK Nursing Support Workers Committee. The Board also received and noted written business reports from the Director, the Board Chair and the former interim Board Chair.
- 11 The Board received and noted a verbal report on recent and forthcoming changes to the HSC pension scheme which have been the subject of public consultation.
- 12 The next meeting of the Board will take place on Monday 22 May 2023.