

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

19 May 2025

- 1 During the Chair's opening remarks, Board members were briefed on the recent launch of the RCN UK report [Pathway to progression: band 5-6 career progression for nursing](#) and the RCN's political engagement in relation to the issue. It was noted that the report has already been sent to the Health Minister, the Chief Nursing Officer, the Department of Health Director of Workforce Policy, and the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Health. The RCN has been invited to present oral evidence to the Committee in September in relation to the case for pay progression for nursing. Board members were briefed on the discussions about the report at the meeting of the Committee on Thursday 15 May 2025 and the RCN's concerns about some of the comments made by Department of Health officials during the session.
- 2 The Board received a verbal briefing on the 2025-2026 Agenda for Change pay award. Board members noted that the UK government has still to announce its response to the recommendations of the NHS Pay Review Body and that the funding of the award in England will have significant implications for its affordability in Northern Ireland. The RCN is committed to press for the award to be confirmed and paid in full in Northern Ireland as soon as possible after the England announcement has been made. The focus of the RCN pay campaign in Northern Ireland also now embraces further existing priorities to secure fair pay for nursing, such as through the job evaluation process and the pay progression issue highlighted above.
- 3 The Board received and discussed a paper detailed the progress made by the RCN in Northern Ireland in addressing the issues highlighted in the RCN UK report [On the frontline of the UK's corridor care crisis](#). The paper summarised the significant media coverage, and political and stakeholder engagement, deriving from the launch of the report, including the recent commitment by Health Minister Mike Nesbitt requiring HSC trusts to start recording corridor care episodes from June 2025, a key RCN priority. Following discussion, the Board agreed to seek clarity from the Department of Health in relation to the type of data that will now be collated and reported.
- 4 The Board received, discussed and approved a series of quarterly governance assurance reports covering the first quarter of 2025. These comprised: the performance highlight report; an updated RCN Northern Ireland risk register; a summary report on the delivery of the Board's operational plan during the quarter; and an operational performance data report. Various matters were raised by Board members for clarification and information, subsequently being addressed by staff.
- 5 The Board received a briefing on the public inquiries in relation to health care issues currently taking place in Northern Ireland. These comprise: 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; proceedings related to hyponatraemia; as well as the UK Covid-19 public inquiry.
- 6 The Executive Director gave a detailed verbal update on a range of key professional issues. These included: various professional regulatory matters; the RCN's continuing focus on addressing and eliminating corridor care; the current review of

the Delivering Care policy framework and the continuing shortfall in associated funding, which the RCN has raised with the Health Minister; the forthcoming Safe and Effective Staffing Bill; and the implications of the recent Department of Health announcement of the pre-registration commissioning numbers for 2025-2026.

- 7 The Board received, noted and duly approved progress reports on the various RCN Northern Ireland branch operational plans for the first quarter of 2025. The Board also received and noted a verbal update on the RCN branch review.
- 8 The Board discussed and reflected upon the experiences of RCN members in Northern Ireland at RCN Congress 2025, held in Liverpool from 12 to 15 May.
- 9 The Board received a verbal report on the various consultation responses that are currently being progressed. These comprise Department of Health consultations on a framework for learning and improvement from patient safety incidents, and a regional review of neurology services. Board members outlined RCN members' concerns about the current serious adverse incidents investigation process and these are now being incorporated in the Board's response to this consultation.
- 10 A detailed update from the Associate Director, Nursing Policy and Practice on the work of the RCN Northern Ireland Nursing Policy and Practice Department was received, noted and discussed. The Board also discussed and agreed proposed revised operational guidance for the RCN Northern Ireland professional networks.
- 11 The Board noted and endorsed the latest update reports received from RCN Council, the Trade Union Committee, the Professional Nursing Committee, the UK Reps Committee, and the Nursing Support Workers Committee.
- 12 The Board also received and noted update reports from the Board Chair and the Executive Director.
- 13 Under any other business, the Board discussed members' concerns at the lack of availability of car parking permits for some staff at certain HSC hospital locations, particularly the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. Whilst it was accepted that this inequity derives from a fundamental mismatch between car parking capacity and demand, the Board agreed to continue to reflect and escalate members' concerns in advance of the introduction of free parking for staff and patients in 2026.
- 14 The next quarterly meeting of the RCN Northern Ireland Board will take place on Monday 15 September 2025.