

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

24 May 2021

- 1 In her opening remarks, the Board Chair welcomed Chair of RCN Council Dave Dawes. She also welcomed Rita Devlin in her capacity as Acting Director and Dolores McCormick in her new role as Associate Director, Employment Relations and Member Services. The Board Chair thanked Brian Morton for his service to the Board following the recent completion of his secondment. She also conveyed the best wishes of Board members to Briege Quinn following her recent retirement from her substantive position with the Public Health Agency.
- 2 The Board received a presentation on training for RCN accredited representatives. This highlighted the successful migration of training delivery to online platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to engage members who do not wish to undertake a formal representative role but would be interested in an enhanced activist role. In this respect, members were briefed on the development of an organising model for the RCN and the associated training that is currently being provided to members, including 33 from Northern Ireland.
- 3 Denise Kelly provided an update on the work of the RCN UK Trade Union Committee, including the latest developments with the RCN's Fair Pay For Nursing campaign. She highlighted the fact that the NHS Pay Review Body is due to report soon and also outlined proposed changes to strengthen governance arrangements in relation to the pay campaign. This was followed by an update from Siobhan Donald on the work of the RCN UK Professional Nursing Committee. She highlighted in particular the recent publication of the RCN's [workforce standards](#). The Board Chair emphasised the importance of Board members actively contributing to the development of responses to key RCN UK and Northern Ireland consultations.
- 4 The Board Chair introduced a report from the meeting of the Board's Pay and Safe and Effective Care Sub-Group held on 19 April 2021. This highlighted the sub-group's particular focus on the implementation of measures to promote safe staffing. The Board agreed the proposed terms of reference and scheme of delegation.
- 5 The Acting Director provided a review of progress in relation to the safe staffing and pay demands that formed the basis for the industrial action taken by RCN members in Northern Ireland during December 2019 and January 2020. This update highlighted the delivery of the RCN's demand for pay parity and the progress that has been made in addressing safe staffing priorities, whilst also noting that some issues, particularly in relation to pay progression and safe staffing legislation, have not yet been adequately progressed because of the pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This was followed by a wide-ranging discussion on job evaluation, pay progression, support for pre-registration nursing students and succession planning.

- 6 The Board received a verbal update on the implementation of the provisions of the Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. This highlighted significant concerns about the imminent implementation of the requirements of the legislation. It was noted that the RCN is currently providing additional training for accredited representatives in relation to the requirements of the Act.
- 7 The Acting Director introduced new RCN guidance on [prioritising personal safety](#). This highlights, in particular, the responsibilities of employers and the guidance has been shared with employers in order to emphasise their duty of care in this respect.
- 8 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 noted 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.
- 9 Reports from the six RCN branches for the first quarter of 2021 were received and approved. It was noted that all branches are continuing to meet regularly and provide professional development activity for members on a virtual basis.
- 10 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.
- 11 The Board received a presentation on the RCN Group education strategy. An update was also provided on issues related to the independent nursing and residential care home sector. This led to subsequent discussion about the impact of the Care Partners initiative and the implications for the sector of the Mental Capacity Act.
- 12 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 first quarter of 2021.
- 13 The Board received an update on arrangements for RCN Congress 2021. It was noted that the intention is for voting members to have the option of attending in person or participating virtually. The fringe programme and exhibition will be fully online.
- 14 The Acting Director provided a briefing on the new RCN [workforce standards](#).
- 15 Board members received a verbal update on the Department of Health consultation on the introduction of a statutory duty of candour in Northern Ireland. A Board task and finish group was established to inform the RCN's response. All RCN members are encouraged to share their views in order to help shape this response to this consultation and are invited to contact john.knape@rcn.org.uk in order to do so.

- 16 In her closing remarks, the Board Chair noted that this was the last Board meeting at which Business Manager Joy Ireland would be in attendance. The Board Chair thanked Joy on behalf of the Board for her outstanding service to the RCN.
- 17 The next meeting of the RCN Northern Ireland Board takes place on Monday 6 September 2021. A Board development day will be held on Thursday 24 June 2021.