

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

7 December 2020

- 1] In her opening remarks, the Board Chair noted that this was the final Board meeting of the year and the last meeting of the current Board membership. She congratulated the successful candidates in the recent Board election, who will formally take up their positions as from 1 January 2021. The Board Chair also thanked the retiring Board members for their contributions to the work of the RCN and, in particular, paid tribute to the valuable support she has received from the Vice Chair.
- 2] The Director reiterated the comments of the Board Chair and thanked Board members for their continuing support to her and to the wider RCN staff in the discharge of their responsibilities. In particular, the Director acknowledged the leadership that Board members had demonstrated during the industrial action taken in December 2019 and January 2020, as well as throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The Director also informed Board members that the Deputy Director, Garrett Martin, has decided to leave the RCN in order to pursue new opportunities.
- 3] The Board Chair provided a verbal report on the outcomes of the recent RCN General Meeting and, in particular, drew the attention of Board members to the forthcoming review of RCN governance arising from the General Meeting.
- 4] Board member Denise Kelly, who represents Northern Ireland on the RCN UK Trade Union Committee, provided a verbal update on the RCN's Fair Pay For Nursing campaign. In particular, she highlighted the RCN petition that was launched immediately after the government's recent spending review announcement, and reported that the RCN has recently met nine of the eighteen Northern Ireland MPs, covering all four political parties with Westminster representation, in order to seek their support for the campaign and to discuss a broad range of workforce issues. Denise also provided a verbal report on the RCN's engagement with the NHS Pay Review Body and the development of an independent sector pay strategy, focused upon securing, as a minimum, parity with Agenda for Change terms and conditions.
- 5] Board members received a verbal report on the recent work of the Northern Ireland Trade Union Partnership Forum, focusing upon the issues of death in service for student members, the Northern Ireland Covid-19 vaccination plan, and childcare support. It was noted that the RCN is determined to hold the Minister for Health to account for the delivery of his commitment to enact safe nurse staffing legislation and this has been a principal focus of the political influencing activity currently being undertaken with individual members of the Assembly Committee for Health.

- 6] The Board received a verbal update on recent developments in respect of the investigation of allegations of the abuse of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital, which are now the subject of a statutory public inquiry.
- 7] The Board received, noted and approved an operational plan update, a revised RCN Northern Ireland risk register, and the latest quarterly performance management report. Board members noted and welcomed the substantial growth in RCN membership in Northern Ireland recorded over the preceding twelve months.
- 8] The Board received and noted the latest quarterly reports from the RCN branches in Northern Ireland.
- 9] The Board received and discussed a paper outlining the RCN's Sensemaker® project in Northern Ireland and providing an analysis of the submissions received to date.
- 10] The Board approved proposals for the allocation of funding to support the attendance of members from Northern Ireland at RCN Congress 2021.
- 11] The Board approved a proposal to establish a Newly-Registered Nurses Network in Northern Ireland in order further to enhance the support provided to members at this important formative stage of their careers.
- 12] The Board received, discussed and welcomed an extensive report and presentation on the RCN UK Independent Health and Social Care Strategy.
- 13] The next meeting of the Board takes place on Monday 15 February 2021.