

## RCN Wales Board

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Minutes of the open meeting held on 2 June 2023  
commencing at 09.30

The meeting was held in the RCN Wales Board headquarters, Ty Maeth, Cardiff  
and via Teams

Present	Position
Jacquelin Davies	Chair, RCN Wales Board / Welsh member on the Trade Union Committee
Steve Watson	Vice Chair / Council member for Wales
Dr Carolyn Middleton, MBE	Welsh member on Professional Nursing Committee – <i>via Teams</i>
Alison Magor	Board member
Anne Stevenson	Board member
Catherine Jones	Board member – <i>left at 12 noon</i>
Euan Hails	Board member – <i>via Teams</i>
Gaynor Jones	Board member
Kokila Swamynathan	Board member
Mark Crothers	Board member
Nicola Milligan	Board member
Susan Williams	Board member – <i>left at 12 noon</i>
Apologies	
Lynne Puckett	Board member
Neil Thomas	Board member
Richard Hughes	Board member
In attendance:	
Helen Whyley	Director, RCN Wales
Nicky Hughes	Associate Director of Nursing (Employment Relations)
Sandy Harding	Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice)
Helen Carlyon	Finance & Business Continuity Manager
Katie Branch	Complaints, Quality & Administration Services Manager
Lisa Turnbull	Policy, Parliamentary & Public Affairs Manager – joined at
Jayne Taylor	Executive Assistant to the Director, RCN Wales

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the Open session.

Apologies had been received from Board members, Lynne Puckett, Neil Thomas and Richard Hughes.

### 1.2. Declaration of Interests

The Board Chair asked Board members to declare any possible interests with any items on the agenda.

No further declarations were made.

## 2. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

### 2.1 Minutes from the previous meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 17 February 2023 had been circulated and were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 2.2 Review of Action Sheet

All actions were either noted as completed or updated on the action sheet.

### 2.3 Matters Arising

There were no further matters arising.

## 3. OPERATIONAL UPDATES

### 3.1 RCN Wales Board Chair's Report

A report had been received and was noted.

The Board Chair took the Board through the paper.

The Board was grateful to Board member, Euan Hails for volunteering to sit on the RCN Wales Scholarship Fundraising Group.

An error in recording Board member, Mark Crother's attendance at the Board meeting in June 2021 was noted within the Chair's report and will be corrected.

### 3.2 Director, RCN Wales Report

A report had been received and was noted.

The Director took the Board through the report and highlighted the following:

- The Health Education & Improvement Wales (HEIW) Nursing Retention Subgroup has published guidance for nursing retention in March 2023. RCN Wales welcomed the guidance and has raised its implementation with the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Chief Nursing Officer for Wales.
- The Welsh Government has set out the NHS Workforce Implementation Plan but a plan for retention of nursing staff has yet to be published.
- RCN Wales does not have a seat on the Strategic Workforce Implementation Board but the Associate Director of Nursing (Employment Relations) sits on the Board in her role on the NHS Wales Partnership Forum. The Board noted that the Director would write to Judith Paget, Director General of Health and Social Services/Chief Executive NHS Wales, requesting that the RCN has a seat on this Board in its own right.
- The Cross Party Group meeting to discuss the future of community nursing was very successful. The Cross Party Group Annual General Meeting could not be held in February 2023 and will be held as soon as possible. RCN Wales is working with the Chair, Jenny Rathbone MS, and Julie Richard, Director, RCM Wales to determine how midwifery can be appropriately included on future agendas.
- The Director is working with the new Chair of the All Wales Executive Directors of Nursing Peer Group, Nicola Williams, to develop a more collaborative relationship.
- The Director met with Professor Daniel Kelly, RCN Chair of Nursing Research on 10 February 2023 to discuss the RCN Wales part funded PhD undertaken by Judith Benbow and its legacy.
- The Director held an introductory meeting with Iona Collins, BMA Wales Council Chair, on 20 April 2023 and regular meetings will be arranged. RCN Wales had championed the Stop It Now work that the BMA had been involved in.
- On 28 March 2023, the Director spoke at the Professional Standards Authority, Welsh Government seminar re regulatory developments and the Welsh context.
- On 30 March 2023, the previous Chief Nursing Officer for Wales, Professor Jean White was appointed as High Sherriff of Mid Glamorgan.
- The Plaid Cymru party conference will be held in the Autumn.

Concern was expressed with the lack of progress on the retention strategy as England are 3 years into their strategy work which is proving successful.

A suggestion was made that the commissioning figures submitted by health boards should be made more transparent.

The Director assured the Board that as a member of the Stakeholder Reference Group, RCN Wales has continued to lobby on the workforce strategy and commissioning numbers. The Board noted that the Director has also raised these concerns with the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Chief Nursing Officer for Wales and will continue to hold them to account.

The Director agreed to submit a report on education commissioning to the Closed session of the September Board.

**ACTION 08:** The Board to receive a report on education commissioning in the Closed session of the September Board.

### 3.3 Correspondence

A report had been received and was noted.

The Director reminded the Board that correspondence is available to view by contacting the Director's office.

The Director highlighted the following correspondence:

- On 15 December 2022 the Director had written to all Executive Directors of Nursing in Wales to request their health boards' bench marking activity against the RCN Workforce Standards that had been launched three years earlier. The Board noted that the standards complement the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 statutory guidance. The Board noted that the Director had been informed by the Chief Nursing Officer for Wales that all health boards had undertaken a bench marking exercise against these RCN standards. The Board noted that to date only the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board had responded. The Board was assured that follow up letters had been sent and their responses would be pursued.
- On 23 March 2023, the Director wrote to Lisa Llewelyn, Director of Nurse and Health Professional Education, HEIW to establish a link between HEIW and the RCN on the commissioning of the Specialist Practitioner Qualification (SPQ) for Learning Disability Nurses (LDN) within Wales. Some meetings have taken place re SPQ for LDN and a fuller update will be included in the education commissioning paper that will be submitted to the Closed session of the September Board.
- On 26 March 2023, the Director had received a letter from the Royal College of Psychiatrists Wales asking RCN Wales to be involved in the review into the implementation of previous mental health report recommendations in Betsi Cadwaladr UHB. The Board noted that this

is the first time that the RCN had been invited to do this as a Royal College.

- On 3 April 2023, the Director had received an anonymous whistleblowing letter in relation to Swansea Bay University Health Board. The Board was assured that the letter was shared with the Executive Director of Nursing who had shared it with staff via the staff bulletin. The Board was assured that this is being followed up by an RCN Senior Officer.
- On 27 April 2023, the Director wrote to the Chief Nursing Officer for Wales regarding concerns that some mental health providers are trying to close nursing vacancy gaps in inpatient mental health wards (both adult and children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)) by substituting registered learning disabilities nurses and/or mental health nurses with registered adult and/or children's nurses. The Board noted that this had been brought to RCN Wales' attention by the RCN UK Nursing department. The Director discussed this with the Chief Nursing Officer for Wales who had stated that she would respond.

The Board recognised concerns around restraining patients safely and it was reported that some mental health wards do not have enough staff to comply with the law and ensure that Section 52 is only applied by a Mental Health nurse.

A query was raised as to whether or not overseas nurses, who were not RCN members, could access support from the RCN in their first year in the UK. The Director confirmed that there is an unwritten policy that overseas nurses can get some support in their first year in the UK if they are not members and that this is looked at on a case by case basis.

The Board noted that the Betsi Cadwaladr Foundation Scholarship Awards would cease in 2023. The Director explained that RCN Wales administers these awards on behalf of the Chief Nursing Officer for Wales, who no longer wishes them to continue.

#### 3.4 Policy, Parliamentary & Public Affairs Impact Report

A report had been received and was noted.

The Policy, Parliamentary & Public Affairs Officer highlighted the following:

- The Board noted that the annex to the paper had been circulated to Board members outside of the meeting pack.
- RCN Wales has influenced the terms of reference for the Welsh Government's Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into the

impact and implementation of the Nurse Staffing levels (Wales) Act 2016. RCN Wales will submit written and oral evidence and RCN members will take part in a discussion group.

- For second year in a row RCN Wales was approached by the Welsh Government's Finance Committee to have RCN members sit on a focus group looking at the impact of the budget on our members.
- RCN Wales attended both the Welsh Labour and Conservative party conferences. A question was raised at the Conservative party conference dinner as to why nurses need to be educated to degree level.

The Board held a robust discussion around its concerns for nurse education in Wales including entry requirements, access routes and falling university applications. Concern was also expressed regarding the Conservative Government's proposal to shorten nurse training from 3 years to 2.5 years. The Board proposed that this be considered as a possible matter of discussion or resolution at Congress 2024.

### 3.5 RCN Wales Nurse of the Year 2023 and Alumni Network Update

A report had been received and was noted.

The Board's attention was drawn to the following:

- The project team is progressing arrangements for the awards ceremony on 29 June 2023.
- RCN Wales is keen to attract new sponsors and the Board noted the new sponsors listed under 2.1 of the report.
- Health Inspectorate Wales has placed an advert in the awards ceremony programme.
- As the current Nurse of the Year winner was unable to attend Congress in 2023, Richard Hellyar, winner of the Innovation and Digitalisation Award was successful in the draw to attend.
- Board member, Kokila Swamynathan attended the Florence Nightingale commemoration service in St Paul's cathedral on 16 May 2023.

The Board Chair advised the Board that the Project Group had considered the feasibility of moving the RCN Wales Nurse of the Year event from City Hall but had agreed to keep it in City Hall, Cardiff as the event needs to have sufficient staff to support it.

**ACTION 09:** The Board agreed to put on a coach for members to attend the Florence Nightingale commemoration service in 2024.

### 3.6 RCN Congress 2023

The Board discussed RCN Congress 2023 and requested that the following feedback be sent to RCN Governance:

- concerns were raised that a lot of items were discussions and not debates.
- concerns over cost of sustenance as the voucher did not cover the cost of a sandwich and a drink.
- the feedback form could have covered more issues including quality of the debates and asked questions about the quality and cost of sustenance.
- it was noted the exhibition was smaller than usual and the stands were not of the usual standard.

**ACTION 10:** The Board's feedback on Congress 2023 to be submitted to RCN Governance.

The Board was reminded that Congress in 2024 would be held in the International Conference Centre in Newport.

The Director informed the Board that a local coordinating committee would be set up and Wales Board members would be invited to sit on that committee.

The Board noted that there is no requirement for bilingual translations for Congress 2024.

The following queries were raised:

- Will the Gwent branch have a key role to play as it is being held in the branch area.
- How do we encourage Executive Directors of Nursing in Wales to enable nurses to attend.
- Will the Agenda Committee speak to branches regarding submissions of resolutions.
- There was a lack of pride experience in 2023, will this be rectified.
- Will voting members who live in close proximity to the venue be able to have accommodation because of the late finishes.

**ACTION 11:** The Board to receive responses to the queries raised regarding Congress in 2024.

## 4. STRATEGIC UPDATES

### 4.1 Industrial Action NHS Pay Report

A report had been received and was noted.

The Associate Director (Employment Relations) took the Board through the paper.

The Board raised the following concerns with the non-pay elements of the pay offer:

- Line managers do not review job description for fear of increasing their staff's banding and may potentially remove things to keep the job banding down.
- Is it feasible to drop to a 36 hour week when line managers state that they cannot support flexible working due to difficulties in covering shifts?
- There should be an all Wales agreement to pay enhanced rates for overtime for nursing staff would reduce the reliance on agency staff.

The Associate Director of Nursing (Employment Relations) assured the Board that the Welsh Partnership Forum has issued a very strong statement stating that flexible working should be facilitated and only refused under extreme circumstances. The Board noted that this would require a cultural change. The Board was informed that a workshop would be held to take this forward. The Board was assured that the Welsh Partnership Forum will hold the Welsh Government and NHS Employers to account to implement these changes.

The Board raised the following concerns with the retire and return policy

- Staff are denied returning to work post-retirement if they can only work 2 days a week as health boards cannot fill a 3 day post. Health boards do not consider who else might welcome dropping to 3 days.
- If staff take their pension, it triggers a break in their contract and staff return on a new contract, which will be reviewed in 12 months and then staff could be let go.
- The Welsh Partnership Forum had stated that they would abolish temporary contracts for people who retire and return so there is no break in service and this should be challenged.

The Board was informed that staff may not be able to return on the same grade but could work as supporting new starters on wards which may increase costs initially but could increase retention.



**ACTION 12:** The Associate Director of Nursing to feed back the Board's concerns to NHS Employers and report back to the Board.

#### 4.2 NHS Wales Partnership Forum Update

The Associate Director (Employment Relations) gave a verbal update as follows:

- The last meeting was cancelled due to pay negotiations.
- The next full Welsh Partnership Forum meeting will be on 13 July 2023 which clashes with the RCN Wales strike days and the RCN will not attend.

#### 4.3 Independent Sector and Social Care update

A report had been received and was noted.

The Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice) gave a verbal update as follows:

- A care home video to demonstrate the opportunities available in registered care homes with nursing and the essential role of the care home nurse will be released shortly.
- Board members were urged to ask their branches to consider how they can support this work.
- The roundtable event held on 28 March 2023 was very successful and further roundtable events are planned.
- The roles of the Policy, Parliamentary & Public Affairs Manager and the Independent Sector and Community Adviser were established prior to the creation of the Independent Sector Group. Consequently, RCN Wales has a different emphasis on policy and not just recruitment and so may not achieve the recruitment KPIs set.

#### 4.4 An initial review of the policy drivers for Occupational Health services in Wales

A report had been received and was noted.

The Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice) informed the Board that there are no educational programmes to support occupational health nurses to be able to practice as HEIW does not commission them.

The Board noted that RCN Wales is undertaking a full review of this and how best to call for commissioning of occupational health services in Wales. The Board will be updated on the next steps.

The Board expressed concerns with the lack of occupational health services which causes delays to getting nurses back into work and with the quality of telephone referrals.

#### 4.5 RCN Workforce Standards Update

A report had been received and was noted.

The Associate Director of Nursing (Professional Practice) gave a verbal update as follows:

- It has been three years since the launch of the RCN Workforce Standards.
- The Director has written to the Executive Directors of Nursing for feedback on how they are being implemented in the health boards. There is contradictory information coming out from the Officer of the Chief Nursing Officer to what is reflected on the ground in Wales.
- The RCN Workforce Standards checklist and champions were launched at Congress in 2023.
- The Acute Care and Leadership Adviser is undertaking a piece of work in health boards and the independent sector.
- Greg Dix, Executive Director of Nursing, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, attended the launch in Congress and will share the health board's implementation plan as best practice across Wales.
- A presentation has been developed to target band 7s to understand their role in taking this forward.

The Director suggested that health boards should be encouraged to have champions for the RCN Workforce Standards.

#### 4.6 Succession Planning Committee Update Report and Revised Terms of Reference

A report had been received and was noted.

The Director has met with individual Board members and offered them the opportunity to take up the buddy system.

The Board was asked to consider the proposals for the Committee to draft criteria for Wales that would ensure wider attendance from members in Wales at Congress and to consider giving a strong mandate to the Vice Chair/Council member for Wales to request that Council reconsider its Criteria and guidance for selecting voting members for Congress 2024.

The Director stressed that Board members needed to recognise their own conflict of interest with regards to this proposal as all Board members are funded to attend Congress. The Director stated that this work might not be completed in time for Congress in 2024.

The Board Chair highlighted that a lot of the same active branch members attend Congress every year and the Committee would like to expand attendance within the branches. The Board Chair stressed that these changes meet with the recommendations from the Carr report.

The Vice Chair informed the Board that Council would look at Congress as part of its review.

The Board discussed this proposal and made the following comments:

- Some people have attended Congress for several consecutive years which does not aid succession planning.
- Any RCN member can attend Congress and the Board would welcome more members from Wales to attend Congress in 2023.
- The guidance could be more robust as there are anomalies across countries and regions.
- Branch officials work hard to encourage members to attend Congress but what would happen if the branch does not meet its criteria?
- The wording within the recommendations of the terms of reference needs to recognise that amending the criteria would not ensure but would encourage wider attendance.

Decision: The Board ratified the Succession Planning Committee revised Terms of Reference as set out in appendix 3 with a correction to recognise that the criteria would not ensure but would encourage wider attendance.

The Board agreed the following actions

**ACTION 13:** The Board agreed to invite branches and active forum members to a workshop to look at drafting criteria for Wales that would encourage wider attendance from members in Wales at Congress.

**ACTION 14:** The draft criteria for Wales that would encourage wider attendance from members in Wales at Congress to be submitted to the September Board for consideration.

**ACTION 15:** Following the workshop, to give a strong mandate to the Vice Chair/Council member for Wales to request that Council reconsider its Criteria and guidance for selecting voting members for Congress 2024.

#### 4.7 Update from Cangen Gogledd Cymru Branch

The Board did not receive a presentation from the Branch Chair, Sandra Robinson-Clark as she had given apologies.

#### 4.8 Update on Cardiff and the Vale Branch Plan

The Board did not receive a presentation from the Branch Secretary, Rachel Hart as she had given apologies.

#### 4.9 Update from Gwent Branch

The Board did not receive a presentation from the Branch Chair, Lynne Puckett as she had given apologies for the Open session of Board.

The Board Chair expressed disappointment that none of the branch representatives were available to present the branch plans. It was agreed for the Board Chair to write to branches and allocate a slot for attendance and to suggest that they have a substitute available should they not be able to attend.

**ACTION 16:** The Board Chair to write to branches inviting them to present their branch plans to the Board on an annual basis and emphasising that a substitute needs to be sent in the event that they are unable to attend.

### 5. COMMITTEE REPORTS TO NOTE

#### 5.1 Report from RCN Council meetings held on 31 January and 28 March 2023

The reports had been received and were noted.

#### 5.2 Reports from the Professional Nursing Committee held on 26 January and 14 March 2023

Two reports had been received and were noted.

The Welsh member on the PNC highlighted the following:

- The Committee met jointly with the TUC to commence work on the recommendations from Carr report.
- The Committee supported the launch of RCN Workforce Standards.
- The Committee supported Protecting the Title Nurse campaign.
- The Director of Nursing gave an update on the key issues from the Committee's workstreams at Congress.
- Some concerns relating to mental health more widely across the UK and practices that are not in line across the UK.
- There is no bespoke plan for the education in England workforce similar to Wales.
- The Welsh member on the PNC raised issues regarding the decline in applications to universities, being unable to fill commissioned places and attrition rates. These are UK issues with affordable childcare facilities being one of the key reasons for people leaving their jobs and universities.
- The work of the PNC has been aligned to the goals of the RCN Institute.

- Looking at how to communicate the work of the PNC to the wider membership.
- The short and long definition of nursing work is almost complete.
- Reviewing the progress against the levels of practice workstream and alignment with the four countries to ensure collaborative working.
- The committee is working with the Safe Staffing for Effective Care Programme Board.

### 5.3 Report from the Nursing Support Workers (NSW) Committee – 6 March 2023

A report had been received and was noted.

The Director informed the Board that Wales has a casual vacancy on the NSW Committee with a part-term of office until 31 December 2024. Board members were urged to encourage nominations for election to the Committee by the closing date of 13 June 2023.

### 5.4 Report from the Trade Union Committee – March 2023

The Board Chair gave a verbal update as follows:

- The Committee has held a joint workshop with the PNC looking at the Carr and KPMG reports and a number of other workstreams.
- Industrial action is being undertaken in a number of NHS and private organisations.
- There was potential for RCN Wales members to be in pension areas but NHS pensions have changed the rules so that there is no onerous impact on NHS pension members in Wales.

### 5.5 Report from the Student Committee – May 2023

The report had been received and was noted.

### 5.6 Report of the UK Reps Committees – February 2023

The report had been received and was noted.

## 6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 6.1. The Board raised the following items:

- How difficult it had been to obtain ‘freebies’ for International Nurses Day.
- Thank you to the IT department for resolving Board members’ IT issues.

There were no further items of business.

The Board Chair closed the meeting at 12:50.

ET: Helen Whyley, Director, RCN Wales

Email: [helen.whyley@rcn.org.uk](mailto:helen.whyley@rcn.org.uk)