

Professional Nursing Committee Report to Members – February 2024

1. This report reflects work done by the Professional Nursing Committee since the last report and an update from our most recent meeting on 1 February 2024.
2. This was our first meeting of the year and the first for our five new members, Aquiline Chivinge (East Midlands), Alisha Brown (student member formerly on the Trade Union Committee), Donna Gallagher (Northern Ireland), Oladunni Akinbulumo (North West) and Sonia Henry (London). It was lovely to meet them all and welcome them to our Committee.
3. We also had the pleasure of meeting jointly with the Trade Union Committee for an induction session the day before where we welcomed all of our new members and introduced them to the work of the College and our respective Committees.
4. We were delighted to have been joined by our General Secretary and Chief Executive, Pat Cullen, who spoke about the issues currently affecting members across the four countries and the RCN's priorities in addressing these. We also took part in a joint session to inform development of the RCN's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and George Woods, now Associate Director of the Activist Academy, facilitated a session to determine our learning and development training needs.
5. At the start of our meeting the next day, we reviewed the joint session and all agreed that as we work closely together on matters of shared interest, it was really positive for PNC and TUC colleagues to meet together and build on this spirit of collaboration. We are looking forward to the work we will progress together in the year ahead.
6. The report of our 1 February meeting follows.

Annual Review of Committee Terms of Reference

7. The first item on our agenda was to carry out the annual review of our terms of reference. Given that the review of the RCN Scheme of Delegation is ongoing, and we recognise that this will impact on our terms of reference, we agreed to revisit our ToR in Quarter 2 to ensure alignment with the new Scheme of Delegation.

Chief Nurse's Update

8. Professor Nicola Ranger, Chief Nurse, briefed us on the [Department of Health and Social Care's consultation](#) on a separate pay spine for nursing which closes on 4 April.
9. We recognised that having initially had a positive impact on nursing pay and careers, Agenda for Change no longer serves nursing well. Many registered nurses spend the entirety of their careers at Band 5. In comparison to other professions nursing sits towards the bottom of the pay and grading structure, without a clear route through. We need to ensure that nursing staff will be rewarded for their skills and knowledge while staying close to clinical care, if that is their choice, as well as enabling career progression. Something needs to change, and the consultation on the separate pay spine is an opportunity for us to make that case.
10. The Committee will be inputting to the RCN's response to the consultation, and this will be the subject of our next 'deep dive' session on 20 February, as well as a joint session with our colleagues on TUC.
11. We also discussed the normalising of corridor care which is a big concern for us at the moment. We recognise that this is happening across all health and social care settings, not just in emergency or acute care, but also in the community and in mental health. The Committee will continue to lead on the RCN's work to raise the alarm on this issue and highlight the negative impacts on patients.
12. We welcome, and will be taking part in, the listening events taking place shortly to engage with members to gather additional intelligence on corridor care.

Committee Work Programme

13. The majority of our meeting was spent reviewing and discussing our work programme for 2024 and ensuring that we are addressing the key professional issues for members and the College. We are working with Nicola and her team to ensure alignment with the Nursing Department work programme and avoid any duplication in monitoring and reporting when undertaking our governance function.

14. We also introduced our new members to the PNC risk register and discussed how we will lead and monitor progress on our key areas of work. We agreed that the risks currently on our register around delivery of the RCN Institute and 'influencing political decisions' are wider than the remit of PNC and so should sit on the Group risk register.

Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC)

15. One of our most significant workstreams is Staffing for Safe and Effective Care. We discussed how staffing issues continue to impact our members and new members of the Committee were briefed on the outcomes of the [international safe staffing summit](#) that took place in December.
16. We noted next steps in the campaign for mandated patient:nurse ratios and the work that has taken place on this since our last meeting to begin to develop the evidence base to demonstrate the value of ratios in all health and care settings.
17. Given that 2024 is a General Election year, we also discussed the proposed content of the RCN's manifesto which needs to set out our expectations of a new UK government, particularly in relation to staffing for safe and effective care.
18. As part of our ongoing work which addresses the role and scope of practice of the Registered Nurse Associate, we agreed that an RCN position statement should be developed on registered nurses and registered nurse associates working in maternity services.

RCN Professional Framework

19. We discussed the continuing development of the RCN Professional Framework and work that has been delivered to date, including the [definition and principles of nursing](#) and the RCN's position on [registered nurse substitution](#).
20. We are looking forward to the imminent publication of the new definitions and standards for enhanced and consultant level practice, and the revised definition and standards of advanced level practice. We made some final suggestions to enhance the clarity of the model developed through this workstream.
21. We further confirmed plans for a workstream to address supportive and assistive roles in the nursing workforce, and this will be undertaken in collaboration with the Nursing Support Workers Committee, alongside other expert members.

22. The work on advanced practice will be reflected in the RCN's contribution to the deliberations of the NMC with regards to possible regulation of advanced practice.

Public Policy

23. We recognised that as 2024 is a General Election year it is an opportunity to make the voice of nursing heard through the RCN's manifesto setting out our expectations of a new UK government, as well as parallel work in the devolved nations.
24. We were updated on ongoing public policy work to influence policies that impact on our members. We discussed the [Strikes \(Minimum Service Levels\) Act](#) and the impact that this will have on our members' freedom to strike.
25. We were briefed on the Westminster Hall debate that took place on 31 January led by Kwasi Kwarteng MP on international recruitment into the health and social care sector. The briefing prepared for MPs by the RCN was well used during the debate to shed light on the experiences of some of our internationally recruited members.

RCN Institute of Excellence

26. We received an update on development of the Institute and the five academies that will sit beneath the Institute umbrella. We have agreed that this will be a significant item on the agenda for our next joint meeting with the Trade Union Committee in March.
27. We also received a presentation on the draft RCN Research Strategy which will ensure that the RCN's work, and that of the Institute and its academies, is underpinned by high-quality research to achieve the organisation's strategic goals for the nursing workforce.
28. Subject to a few minor amendments, we expect to receive the final version of the strategy for approval by email shortly following which it will be launched at Congress 2024 in Wales.

Nursing Policy/ Regulatory Reform

29. Following discussion on the possible regulation of advanced practice earlier in the meeting, we also received an update on the campaign to protect the title 'nurse'.
30. As reported previously, while the government's [reform of the legislative framework for regulated health and care professionals](#) across the UK is ongoing, progress remains slow. The NMC will be the next professional regulator to be looked at in relation to regulatory reform.

Forums and Networks

31. We received an update on implementation of the recommendations arising from the [Forums and Networks Review](#). While progress has been slow, improvements have now been made to the way forum steering committees communicate with each other with the rollout of RCN email addresses and access to MS Teams. Additionally, a leadership development programme for Forum Chairs and steering committee members is in the final stages of development, and a number of proposed changes to forums governance processes have been recommended to the Governance Committee.
32. We raised concern previously at the number of red risks relating to the Review and how long implementation was taking. As a Committee we are now reassured that progress is being made in a number of areas. We recognise, however, that the Review was undertaken in 2021 and was reflective of a particular point in time. Now in 2024, we are continuing to engage with the members of our forums to hear their views on how they need to be supported to sustain the significant contribution they make to the professional work of the College.

RCN Congress 2023 Agenda Items

33. We noted the [report published in December](#) on the work arising from Congress 2023 and the timeline for publication of Council's final report to members ahead of Congress 2024. Individual members of PNC continue to provide oversight of those items allocated to the committee.

Governance and Culture Reviews: Joint Partnership Board

34. Paul Trevatt, former Committee member for the London region, joined us to feed back from the Governance and Culture Reviews Joint Partnership Board meeting that morning. We heard that most of the deliverables arising from the reviews are either already complete or are on track.

Next Meeting

35. The next formal PNC meeting takes place on 19 March 2024. We also meet jointly with the Trade Union Committee the day after on 20 March.

Committee Membership 2024

Rachel Hollis (Yorkshire and the Humber – CHAIR)
Colin Baker (South West – VICE CHAIR)
Oladunni Akinbulumo (North West)
Alisha Brown (Student)
Aquiline Chivinge (East Midlands)
Mary Codling (South East)
Tracie Culpitt (Nursing Support Worker)
Donna Gallagher (Northern Ireland)
Martha Gill (Scotland)
Tim Grace (Northern)
Sonia Henry (London)
Raymond McMorrow (West Midlands)
Carolyn Middleton (Wales)
Alison Paterson (Eastern)

Apologies for the February meeting were received from Colin Baker, Mary Codling, and Carolyn Middleton.

Staff Attendance

Professor Nicola Ranger (Chief Nurse)
Lynn Woolsey (Deputy Chief Nurse)
Antonia Borneo (Associate Director of Policy and Public Affairs)
Wendy Preston (Head of Nursing Practice)
Emma Selim (Communications Manager)
Ada Hui (Professional Lead - Research)
Maxine Nunn (Performance, Risk and Assurance Manager)
Christine Callender (Head of Nursing – Quality and Regulation)
Caroline Clinker (Governance Adviser)

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