

RCN Wales Board Report to Branches December 2020

Dear Colleague

I know what a difficult time it has been for you all and especially now given the new situation we find ourselves in. I want to thank each and every one of you and to say how much we appreciate all of your efforts. We are here to support you, should you need us. You have been amazing and have gone way above and beyond in delivering advice and support for our members. I'm very proud of you and proud to represent such dedicated nurses and health care support workers.

2020 had been a very difficult year and I appreciate that things are not likely to improve as we move into the beginning of 2021, after the Welsh Government's announcement that Wales had moved into Tier 4 on 19 December 2020.

Consequently, Plas Eirias and Ty Maeth will remain closed to members until further notice. Staff will continue to work from home where they can.

Just prior to the move to Tier 4, I had raised concerns with the Minister for Health and Social Services about the need to urgently review the routine work in the Health Boards to enable staff to be redeployed into the Covid-19 areas, where needed. The Minister was clear that it is the decision of each individual Health Board which services should stop and they should follow the framework that has been developed.

I, therefore, wrote to all Chief Executives of the Health Boards and Trusts urging them to consider the position, to ensure that they take professional nursing advice and work in partnership at local level. I did this with a heavy heart but knowing that members are becoming exhausted and services at full capacity. A joint Trade Union press statement has also been released urging the Government and the public to support the NHS in Wales.

Over the past few weeks RCN Wales has raised a number of other concerns with Welsh Government and Health Education and Improvement Wales as well, including:

- Payments to NHS staff suffering from long Covid-19 symptoms.

- A change to the All Wales guidelines to ensure pregnant women can be accompanied, where possible, for scans, ante-natal appointments and labour.
- Students who enrolled in September 2018, who opted in during COVID-19, being given only have one attempt to pass any outstanding year two assignments potentially resulting in a delay in qualifying for 8-9 months. We continue to pursue this issue for our student members.

We are keeping up the pressure on the Welsh Government with our **Fair Pay for Nurses campaign** and have held many successful question and answer sessions with members including one on 10 December to talk about the manifesto and NHS pay.

A further member NHS pay meeting will be held at the end of January. Nicky Hughes, Associate Director of Nursing (Employment Relations) continues to attend the regular meetings of Welsh Partnership Forum and Business Committee. The Westminster Government issued their remit letter to the Pay Review Body last week and we expect to see one issued by the Welsh Government soon.

A **branch development** session was held on 23 November which was followed by the Board and branch development day on the 11 December. Both events were well received, and branches are fully supportive of the new template for reporting branch activity to the Board. Branch officials are looking forward to having an opportunity for closer working and communications with the Board.

In the New Year, we will be focussing on holding husting events as we head towards the Senedd Elections on 6 May 2021 and will be organising regional husting events with branches virtually. We will need your support for these events in encouraging members to participate and to talk with the new political candidates. You can find the link to the RCN Wales Manifesto [here](#)

In 2020, our representatives have all demonstrated unwavering commitment, resilience, compassion and leadership in what can only be described as the most challenging year. As a special thank you, the Board, in part sponsored by LV, presented each rep with a letter of sincere thanks and a voucher for £20 as a small token of our appreciation.

Dates for the online representative pathway have been set for 2021 and online delivery is planned until April 2021. The position will then be reviewed as to whether face to face modules can commence safely from September

2021 or whether online modules continue or adopt a blended approach is taken.

The Agenda Committee is exploring an option to move **Congress 2021** to September, having reflected on the overwhelming desire for a face-to-face event and taking into consideration the COVID-19 situation and its impact on members. The submission forms for fringe items and the agenda items will remain live on the website and the new deadlines will be added as soon as we have more information.

As we look back over 2020, there have been some key successes and uplifting moments that have helped us to cope.

I want to offer my personal thanks to Denise Llewellyn for her unflinching support and advice as RCN Wales Board Chair. Denise steered the Board through this difficult period. Denise chose to stand down at the end of the year and it gives me great pleasure to congratulate Richard Jones on his successful election to the role of RCN Wales Board Chair. Richard will take up that role on 1 January 2021 and will lead us through the next two years and we wish him well in this new role.

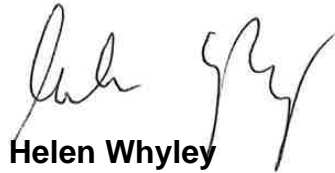
I would like to thank Board members Moira Davies, Neil Evans and Billy Nichols, who will down from the Board on 31 December 2020, for their dedicated service on behalf of members in Wales. I would also like to congratulate our newly elected and re-elected Board members Ceri Dolan, Steven Watson, Dr Carolyn Middleton MBE, Rhys Vanstone, Susan Williams, Catherine Jones, and Nicola Milligan who will take up their places on the Board from 1 January 2021.

Sadly, one of my personal disappointments this year was that we were not able to hold our 9th annual RCN Wales Nurse of the Year Awards. However, we were able to celebrate the **2020 / 2021 International Year of the Nurse and Midwife** with some commissioned artwork by Welsh artist Nathan Wyburn, which utilised a variety of RCN Wales' memorabilia to produce a striking portrait of Betsi Cadwaladr, that will be displayed in Ty Maeth. Read more about this [here](#)

RCN Wales was also given an opportunity to collaborate with Only Boys Aloud, with special guest Sophie Evans, to produce a video and record them singing 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' as a special thank you to nurses and health care workers across Wales for their work during the pandemic. Watch the video [here](#)

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continued support and to send you my best wishes for a merry and safe festive holiday and a happy and healthy New Year.

Best wishes



Helen Whyley
Director, RCN Wales