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CELEBRATING SUCCESS

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Cover image courtesy of Barney Newman



The perfect gift at a fraction of the cost

RCNXtra has some great gift ideas to provide you with inspiration for every member of your family this Christmas. We have secured the best deals for a variety of products so you will get the perfect gift for less!

Visit www.rcn.org.uk/xtra to discover the special Christmas offers.



Model nurse unveiled

A scale model of the proposed Mary Seacole statue was unveiled at RCN headquarters last month. The statue of the iconic nurse will be the first of a named black woman anywhere in England and will be erected in the grounds of St Thomas' Hospital, London, in 2015. For more on the Mary Seacole Awards see pages 8 and 9.

Bill's 'costly burden'

The RCN has described plans to compel organisations such as the College to hand over personal information about members to the Government as "unnecessary, intrusive and worrying". RCN Chief Executive Peter Carter said: "This part of the lobbying bill will be another costly burden upon trade unions, which would see our members picking up the tab." The RCN believes the bill as a whole is flawed and needs to be altered drastically, he added.

Share your views

The RCN is encouraging members and relatives to complete a survey on ways of improving end of life care following the review of the Liverpool Care Pathway. The Leadership Alliance for the Care of Dying People, of which the RCN is a member, is asking for feedback on proposed advice. Amanda Cheesely, RCN Long Term Conditions Adviser, said: "This is a crucial opportunity to ensure that we get end of life care right for all our patients." Complete the survey at <http://tinyurl.com/k7zbd3>



An independent charity supporting nursing to improve the health and wellbeing of the public

RCN Foundation



Bursaries for HCAs

The RCN Foundation Kershaw Family Bursary 2014 is now open for applications from health care assistants and assistant practitioners. Bursaries of up to £500 are available and can help cover costs for small projects or courses starting between April next year and April 2015. Professor Dame Betty Kershaw is a former president of the RCN. The closing date for applications is 22 January and more information is available on the RCN Foundation website: www.rcnfoundation.org.uk

Celebrating achievement



Do you know of someone who has made an exceptional contribution to the advancement of nursing and/or health care, or to the work of the RCN? If so, then why not celebrate their achievements by nominating them for the RCN Award of Merit or RCN Fellowship.

These prestigious awards are presented to people who have made outstanding contributions to the RCN or for pioneering work in nursing. Nominations close on 23 January. For more information or to request a nomination form, email governance.support@rcn.org.uk

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor



Handling complaints

The RCN has called on nursing staff to help create a more accessible complaints system. Following a review led by Ann Clwyd MP of the way the NHS handles complaints, the RCN pledged to help promote a robust process. RCN Chief Executive Dr Peter Carter said: "One instance of poor care is one instance too many."

RCN backs living wage

RCN activists and staff in the East Midlands were at the announcement last month of an increase in the national living wage – by 20p to £7.65 an hour. The living wage is set independently each year according to the basic cost of living and is higher than the legal minimum. Employers pay the rate voluntarily. The announcement was hosted by Nottingham Citizens, an alliance of organisations of which the RCN is a founding member.

Greening mental health

RCN Mental Health Adviser Ian Hulatt is keen to speak to members interested in green issues in mental health care. Ian said: "Increasing the sustainability of the NHS by energy-saving measures and effective use of resources is a growing agenda. However, it is now reaching into parts of the estate that one would not normally associate with the issue." Ian is on an advisory panel working with a sustainability fellowship appointed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Email ian.hulatt@rcn.org.uk

Warning of hidden workforce crisis



We call on NHS employers to put an end to boom and bust workforce planning

There are nearly 20,000 nursing vacancies currently unfilled in England, says the RCN, warning of a hidden workforce crisis that could have serious consequences for the NHS.

The scale of understaffing is revealed in a special report, *Running the red light*, produced as part of the RCN's *Frontline First* campaign, which was launched in July 2010 to monitor the impact of £20 billion of efficiency savings on clinical staff and services.

The report shows that the problem is far larger than official statistics, which identify that just 3,859 full-time nurse, midwife and health visitor posts have been lost in the NHS in England since May 2010.

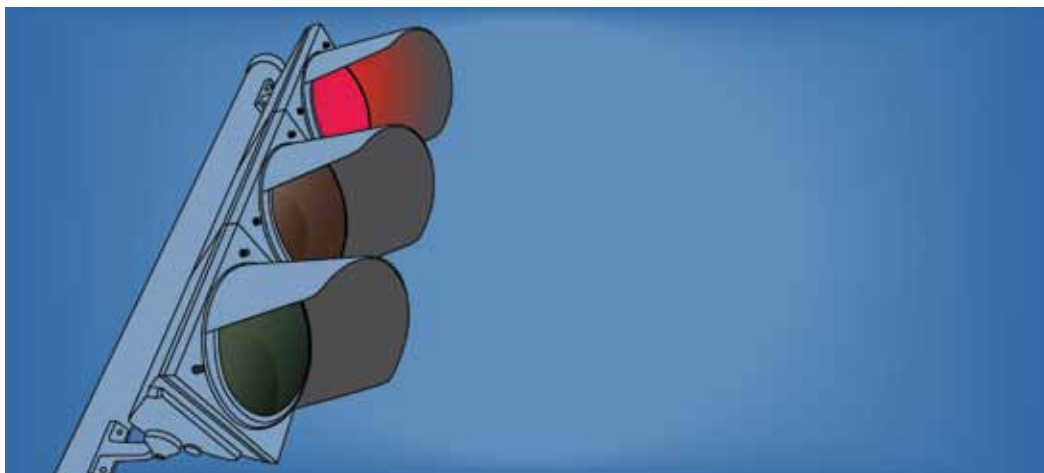
Commenting on the report's findings, Dr Peter Carter, RCN Chief Executive, said: "We sit on the verge of a hidden workforce crisis that desperately needs addressing to ensure the NHS runs properly and patients get the care they deserve."

"Unsafe staffing levels have been implicated in a number of high profile investigations into patient safety. We call on employers in the NHS to put an end to boom and bust workforce planning and develop clear standards to ensure safe staffing levels are met, supported by robust inspection based on reliable data."

The report also highlights a 15 per cent cut in the number of nursing student places commissioned since 2010-11. It forecasts a shortage of 47,000 registered nurses by 2016. To plug the gaps, evidence gathered by the RCN shows that 22 per cent of trusts are already recruiting from abroad, with 9 per cent actively considering the option. The Government's announcement in November of an extra 3,700 nurses was welcomed as 'a start' by the RCN. But an immediate boost to nursing numbers was needed, as part of a longer-term approach to workforce planning, the RCN said.

See page 5 for more about the Government's response to the Francis report.

▶ [Read the full report on the Frontline First website: www.rcn.org.uk/frontlinefirst](http://www.rcn.org.uk/frontlinefirst)



RCN's retired members join equality fight

The RCN now has a strong voice on the UK's biggest campaign group working on behalf of retired people

RCN representatives attended their first council meeting of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) last month after the RCN affiliated to the organisation earlier this year.

Elected from the RCN Retired Members Network, the representatives are Trevor Peel, who is also on the NPC National Executive Committee, Cate Wooley-Brown, Jackie Burns, Dr Joyce Forge and Kate Fitzsimmons.

The NPC is the country's biggest organisation campaigning on behalf of pensioners. It represents up to 1.5 million members nationwide and is a major voice for retired people in the UK. Its main objective is to promote

the welfare and interests of all pensioners, as a way of securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement. The NPC's campaigns are wide-ranging and address issues such as benefits, health care services, fuel poverty and public transport.

The agenda for the last NPC council meeting covered a wide range of issues related to the needs of retired people. This includes an update on the pensions bill currently going through the Westminster parliament, the NPC *Universal Benefits* campaign, and plans for a new fuel poverty strategy to be published next May.

The annual winter death figures and plans for an NPC online campaign were discussed, as well as a briefing on National Dignity Day to be held on 1 February, which will highlight the NPC's dignity code.



Back row: Trevor Peel with Dot Gibson, NPC General Secretary. Front, left to right: Kate Fitzsimmons, Dr Joyce Forge, Cate Wooley-Brown and Jackie Burns

The RCN Retired Members Network will be making communication a top priority. Information will be available on the RCN website but members and prospective members of the network are invited to contact Trevor Peel at trevor@peel1951.freemove.co.uk



The Network will be making communication a top priority

Care Standards in Scotland ready for review

Impact will be far reaching for members, says RCN Scotland

The Scottish Government has announced its eagerly awaited review of the National Care Standards. The standards set out what people can expect from care services in Scotland and the review will begin early next year. The standards were described as "a bit long in the tooth and creaky at the edges" during a 2011 parliamentary inquiry, so a review is overdue.

"In the decade since the standards were introduced, there have been major changes to the policy, delivery and scrutiny of health and social care in Scotland," said RCN Scotland Director Theresa Fyffe.

"With the integration of health and social care fast approaching, the shift in health care away from acute settings, and an increased focus on person-centred outcomes, the standards are no longer fit for purpose."

The impact of the review on RCN members in Scotland is far reaching. The National Care Standards span across all registered care services, including care homes and care at home, as well as independent hospitals and hospices. They include standards on staff qualifications, competencies and accountabilities. The emphasis on health in the National Care Standards is a key issue. "Given the increasing complexity of health care delivered

in the community, the National Care Standards need to have a much greater focus on health care needs than they do now", said Theresa.

"We need assurance that the quality of care meets agreed standards, no matter where that care is delivered."

Currently the National Care Standards are setting-specific. However, the Scottish Government is considering moving away from this approach towards having overarching principles that describe a quality care experience, irrespective of setting.

RCN Scotland will be gathering members' views in the lead up to the Scottish Government's formal consultation.

For more information or to give feedback, visit the RCN Scotland policy web pages or contact helen.richens@rcn.org.uk

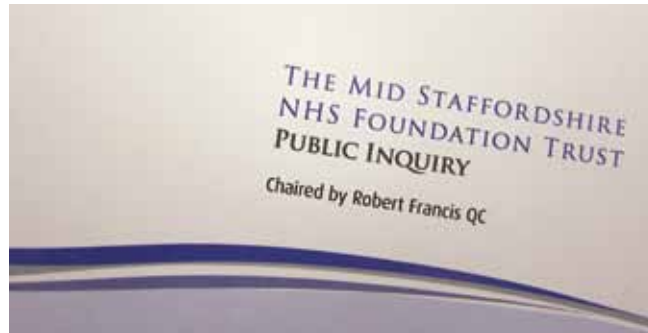
RCN welcomes safe staffing plans

Government plans to make hospitals publish staffing levels come into force next April

The RCN has welcomed the Government's plans to ensure safe levels of staffing on hospital wards, saying they could have "the biggest single impact on improving care in the NHS today".

Dr Peter Carter, RCN Chief Executive, said: "The RCN has been calling for some time for greater transparency in identifying the number of staff on each ward. By making this information available on a monthly basis, we are going some way to ensuring that each hospital in the country offers patients access to the care they deserve."

The plans to make hospitals publish details of the numbers of nursing staff on a ward-by-ward basis – alongside the percentage of shifts meeting safe staffing guidelines – are part of the Government's response to the Francis inquiry into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. Published in



February, this made 290 detailed recommendations. Plans also include a focus on consistent training for health care support workers, through the care certificate. "Although we remain convinced that the mandatory regulation of all health care support workers is the most effective way of protecting patients, this announcement is an important first step," said Dr Carter.

On the new crime of wilful neglect, the RCN says that while individual clinicians who are guilty should be held to account, there are questions over whether a new law is needed. Remedies already exist to tackle staff who are guilty of harming patients, says the RCN.



The biggest single impact on improving care in the NHS today

Long-term planning

RCN gives evidence to a Health Select Committee inquiry

While people with long-term conditions are increasingly being treated in the community, nursing staff are being cut and funding has not risen, the RCN told a Health Select Committee inquiry.

RCN assistant adviser in long-term conditions, Vicki Matthews, stressed the importance of the role that nursing staff play in managing the

care of people who have long-term conditions, including asthma, diabetes and coronary heart disease. More than 20 million people in England are living with at least one long-term condition, while their treatment and care accounts for 70 per cent of health and care spending.

Nursing staff's unique contribution is highly valued by patients, said Vicki, pointing out that by supporting self-care they prevent costly admissions to hospital.



From the heart

Beatrice Tremayne
writing on the *Frontline First* website



"I notice that nobody smiles at work here," my father recently said to me after having treatment as a day patient.

It's the reason I decided to leave my role as a sister on a rehabilitation ward when the stress of it became too much. We had too few staff to provide the individualised care patients need – and deserve.

There was a constant conflict in balancing my obligation to my employer with my professional code of conduct. My first priority has always been the care of my patients, but without the right number of nursing staff on shift it risks catastrophic failures of care.

Thanks to the RCN I was relocated to another role which I enjoy very much.

I'm pleased the RCN's latest *Frontline First* report is focusing the Government's attention on workforce planning. We're being set up to fail if we don't urgently address the numbers of staff we have to cope with increasing demand.

www.rcn.org.uk/frontlinefirst



Feedback

**Gary Kirwan, RCN
Employment Relations
Adviser, on NHS Direct**



The RCN is deeply concerned about the dismantling of NHS Direct and the implications for all 746 remaining staff. A consultation is underway with trade unions and the RCN and Unison are now participating in weekly consultation meetings to try to manage the process.

NHS Direct says it hopes redundancies will be kept to a minimum through transfer and redeployment of staff to other organisations. But the issue is complicated because the future of affected staff is out of the hands of NHS Direct, as it will cease to exist after 31 March 2014. NHS England is yet to decide which of the remaining services will be kept and where those staff will be employed, if they continue to be employed, after the closure date.

The RCN has been in constant talks with NHS Direct to ensure that the best providers of 111 services were chosen to take over, so the announcement was expected. But we still believe this action will not result in the best outcome for patients or our members.

www.rcn.org.uk

Letters and emails

Remembering Dora Frost

I had the honour of representing the RCN at Dora Frost's funeral last month.

The funeral, which was held in the chapel where she was minister for many years, was a celebration of a wonderful life.

Listening to the tributes about Dora made me more sure than ever that her legacy will never be forgotten.

As an active trade unionist, and the RCN's first ever accredited steward, Dora will be remembered by many inside and outside the RCN for her dedication to the cause, her care for nurses, compassion for patients and her humour.

Lorrae Allford, Vice Chair of RCN Council

A forceful advocate of positive work

I was really pleased to see that Geoff Brennan was expanding his very active dissemination strategy about Safewards into last month's Forum Focus in *RCN Bulletin*.

He has been working very hard recently to broadcast this exciting initiative, which offers mental health nurses working in acute mental health inpatient wards guidance about making their wards safer.

This is good news indeed for service users and the staff who work with them.

Geoff has long been a forceful advocate of the positive work that goes on in acute mental health settings, confronting the often doom-laden perceptions that such places are nothing but bad.

Many of the difficulties that afflict such places have enjoyed much amelioration through the considerable body of research outcomes produced over the years by Professor Len Bowers and his inspirational team members like Geoff.

Cris Allen, Chair, RCN Mental Health Forum, by email

What do you think?
Email bulletin@rcn.org.uk

Unrealistic expectations

I write in response to the letter "No easy fix" (November). I couldn't have put it better myself.

The public have expectations far beyond what the NHS can deliver with resources at breaking point. It doesn't matter what their background is, their frustrations are the same.

We offer and discuss lifestyle choices with patients but often see their eyes glaze over at the thought they may have to do something for themselves. But the Government itself repeatedly tells the public they should expect and demand from us. And believe me they do!

What would the Prime Minister suggest to my asthmatic patient who finds difficulty treating the symptoms but has no intention of quitting smoking any time soon? Ministers in their plush offices and their insulated lives should spend time at the grassroots of the NHS for a week. Then they would understand and maybe even stop telling us how to do our jobs!

Julie Harvey, by email

**The RCN represents
nurses and nursing,
promotes excellence
in practice and shapes
health policies.**



Editors: Lynne Pearce and Daniel Allen
Editorial: 020 7647 3627
Email: bulletin@rcn.org.uk
Web: www.rcn.org.uk/bulletin
Address: 20 Cavendish Square,
London W1G 0RN

Classified advertising
Tel: 020 8423 1333
Fax: 020 8872 3197
Email: advertising@rcnpublishing.co.uk

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Monthly poll

Have your say on the issues of the day

This month
Have you had your flu vaccination?

Vote yes or no at www.rcn.org.uk/bulletin

Last month

Do all nursing staff deserve a pay rise this year?

Yes
91%

No
9%



Tweet of the month

www.twitter.com/thercn

I believe staff are scared to report concerns due to stigma on whistleblowing but will fight tooth and nail for our patients.

Kat @weetrina 32m

A tumultuous year

Lessons learnt from a difficult 12 months

It has been a tumultuous year for the NHS, and nurses can justly feel that they have been on the receiving end of more than their fair share of the criticism levelled at the health service. Throughout all of the upheaval, reviews and reports, nurses have continued to do what they do best – deliver the best care possible for patients, and this central pillar of the nursing profession will never change.

However, there have been lessons for everyone in the health service this year. When we look back on 2013 we should think of it not simply as a year of scandals and reviews, but as an opportunity to learn from mistakes and to always strive to improve care. That's why we have called for the NHS to do more to tackle the problem of unsafe staffing levels, and to support staff who raise concerns about patient safety.

It has been a difficult year but few professions are more resilient than



nursing, and I know that in 2014 nurses will continue striving to deliver the best possible care for their patients. The RCN will continue to lobby government, raising awareness and campaigning on your behalf to help you do this.

This time of year demonstrates more clearly than ever the sacrifices made by nursing staff, and I know that many of you will be working through the holidays to care for your patients. I'd like to thank you for that sacrifice and wish you all a happy Christmas and New Year.

Dr Peter Carter, Chief Executive

Online What you've been discussing...



Facebook

www.facebook.com/royalcollegeofnursing

Everyone needs to stand up and fight for the NHS. It is not until you lose it that people will appreciate just what a fantastic system it is. We migrated to Australia seven years ago and although it is a beautiful country, health care is expensive. The hospital system is free – but to take yourself or your child to the doctors costs approx \$80-\$100 each time.

Sarah Ann Broughton



RCN Discussion Zone

www.rcn.org.uk/discussion_zone

Do we really need to be paid extra to work weekends? At the end of the day, we enter nursing knowing that for the majority of us we will need to work any day during the seven day week.

Claire Evans



From the heart

Claire Webster

Newly qualified staff nurse



As a nursing student, not only did I learn clinical skills but also the importance of being caring. Unfortunately my training took place against a backdrop of media and public concern about the quality of nursing care.

But now my whole class are newly qualified nurses the public can be proud of.

We care for infants in their early years and reassure worried parents. We look after young adults involved in tragic accidents and help in moments of crisis. We hold a dying patient's hand and, with great sadness and dignity, care for that person in their final moments. We shed tears for the people in our care and laugh along with patients when all they need is a friend and a smile.

We have an important role as the new faces of the nursing profession. We will deliver the best possible care and be courageous enough to stand up and say no to those who do not rise to our standard.

www.rcn.org.uk/nqn

Changing lives

Susan Embley talks to three RCN members who have been recognised in the Mary Seacole awards, aimed at bringing health benefits to BME communities



Winners past and present were celebrated at the annual Mary Seacole Leadership and Development Awards held at the RCN's London headquarters last month.

The awards, now in their 19th year, offer health professionals the opportunity to work on specific projects that improve health outcomes for black and minority ethnic (BME) people. Six awards totalling £50,000 and funded by the Department of Health and NHS Employers were given this year.

RCN member Perfect Tiritega Mawaka, a community hospitals manager for the North East London NHS Foundation Trust, received a leadership award of £12,500. Perfect qualified as a nurse in 2002. She has a health studies degree and a masters in nursing practices, and is working towards her professional doctorate research degree.

Perfect will be exploring the lived experience of individuals of black ethnicity living with dementia. With personal experience of dementia through a family member, she says: "I'm very interested in the subject and want to understand the impact of dementia for these people in their



day-to-day lives. I've looked closely at it and how it's handled in BME communities. There is a stigma attached to talking about dementia and mental health, which prevents people from getting the best care."

Perfect found there wasn't much research on dementia among people from BME communities and even less on black communities specifically. Thrilled to get the award, Perfect is grateful for the RCN's support with her project. "Although I'm excited, I feel there's a lot of responsibility on me to make a difference in this area as I want to see more BME communities using dementia services and getting better care. I've had a lot of support from the RCN with this project so far. Because it's a leadership award, part of it is about my own development and it's good to have the support from the awards committee."

Dr Calvin Moorley, another RCN member, is about to start a new post this month as a senior lecturer in nursing at London Southbank University. He too received a leadership award and will research stroke aftercare for BME communities in East London. Calvin said: "I'm honoured to be

recognised for my nursing work and getting this prestigious award is overwhelming. But it shows that people have confidence in my ability and share my vision to improve the care of black and Asian stroke survivors through this project."

Calvin qualified as a nurse in 1995 and spent 10 years as an intensive care nurse before completing a degree in social policy. He is interested in stroke aftercare and the interplay of culture on health provisions, and completed his PhD last year on "Life after stroke: personal, social and cultural factors – an inner city Afro-Caribbean experience".

"I found through my PhD work that Asian and Afro-Caribbean people tend to keep their care more in the home and in the hands of relatives after a stroke. The aim of this project is to look at what care stroke sufferers get at home and how we can improve access and support to BME groups, relieving some of the burden from carers," he says.

Tom Sandford, Director of RCN England and chair of the awards steering committee, says: "The committee has been impressed and inspired by the awardees this year and by their creative commitment to addressing health inequalities in their work. Health inequalities in England are growing rather than reducing and the work of the Mary Seacole awards challenges this trend. In particular, I'm delighted that the award winners are focused on interventions that will improve the health outcomes for BME communities."



There is a stigma attached to talking about dementia and mental health

'I wanted to make a difference'



Speaking at the awards ceremony this year was a past winner, Professor Laura Serrant-Green. Laura was the fourth winner of the Mary Seacole award back in 1998 when only one person each year was selected.

"I always worked in sexual health and was a nurse outreach worker in the late eighties and early nineties when HIV and Aids were a big topic," says Laura. "I felt at the time that a lot of care decisions in this area were based on stereotypes regarding black Caribbean men. My project focused on producing evidence that could be used to positively affect sexual health care outcomes for this group."

After completing her award project, Laura went on to do a PhD and was invited to join several groups and thinktanks working on shaping health policies relating to gender, ethnicity and health care. She is now Professor of Community and Public Health Nursing and Associate Dean (Research and Enterprise) at the School of Health and Wellbeing at Wolverhampton University.

Laura serves on the awards steering committee, but will be standing down from her role this year. "It's important that there's a former award member on the committee as they can empathise with the work involved for the winners. When selecting our recipients, the main thing is that their project has some impact on improving the life chances of BME communities in any nursing field. But it's also about them as a person and how they come across.

"When I was most scared doing my own project, I was told not to be scared and that the only thing you have to lose is your anonymity. I look back now at my own project and realise it was the start of a legacy. My work has developed into a research framework for people to use and get both sides of the story – clinical and community. I'm really pleased that the Mary Seacole awards now have sustainable funding to continue. It shows that we've proved our worth, standing up for nursing and improving communities."



But it's also about them as a person and how they come across

Mary Seacole awards

- Created in 1994 to improve the unmet needs of BME communities in England.
- Named after pioneering nurse Mary Seacole, who helped to treat casualties of the Crimean War.
- There are two kinds of award – Leadership and Development, worth £12,500 and £6,250 each respectively.
- The awards are funded by NHS Employers and the Department of Health, and are awarded in association with the RCN, the Royal College of Midwives, Unison and Unite/CPHVA.
- For more information visit www.nhsemployers.org and search for Mary Seacole awards.



The view from here

Sam Roberts

Health care assistant in a medium secure unit in Devon



My unit caters for male adult patients with personality disorders and who have complex care needs. Many will have been through the criminal justice system but their situations are all different.

There is no average day. I can leave one shift and return the next day and it's all different. A new patient can, for example, change the whole dynamic of the unit. Our patients can be volatile and are always vulnerable.

I love my job, but the hardest thing is accepting that some of our patients may never be fully well. It's likely some will always need a level of support from health services. I try to make a difference to them – making their experience as positive as I can, always treating them with care and humanity, no matter what their history.

A sense of humour is a must in this job – it is without doubt a challenging environment, and humour can, and does, bring out the best of all of us there.

www.rcn.org.uk/hca



Tough talking

RCN President Andrea Spyropoulos and RCN Deputy President Cecilia Anim tell Lynne Pearce about their new project to support nursing staff



I want members to know they can come to me to offload

Nursing is facing tough times. That's the message that is coming loud and clear from the UK's nursing staff.

In a survey* of more than 2,000 nursing staff working within the NHS and the private sector, published in September, the RCN discovered that more than half had been made unwell by stress over the previous year. Unable to deliver the care they want to, increasing workloads, feeling unsupported by managers and trying to deal with the rapid pace of change are all piling on the pressure.

"I've been a nurse for more years than I care to remember and I've never seen us struggling this much," says RCN President Andrea Spyropoulos. "Nurses are being pulled in all directions, told to do the impossible, to do more with less, and to do it all with a smile."

And while the cost of living has risen by 14 per cent since 2010, that has been matched with little or no rise in salary for nursing staff. In effect that means a real terms pay cut of nine per cent. "Patient numbers are soaring, budgets are still reducing, jobs are being lost, and you are being told that a one per cent pay rise makes you lucky," says Andrea.

Against this background, Andrea is joining forces with RCN Deputy President, Cecilia Anim in launching a new project, *Nursing in tough times*. The aim is to support nursing staff, both practically and emotionally; highlighting the range of services the RCN has available to help – everything from welfare advice to counselling.



Andrea Spyropoulos and Cecilia Anim (inset)

"I'm not the kind of deputy president who just walks around wearing my chain," says Cecilia. "I'm a hands-on person and I want members to know that they can come to me to offload."

We're on your side

With their range of visits and speaking engagements that take them across the UK, both Andrea and Cecilia are making sure they talk about their new project and give nursing staff the time to share their own experiences.

"This is our way of engaging with members on their turf, above all listening to them and supporting them face-to-face," explains Cecilia. The current economic climate is taking a heavy toll on nursing staff, she believes. "You don't have the resilience to challenge what's happening. You end up feeling lucky just to have a job."

As they invite nursing staff to voice their most pressing worries, some common themes are emerging. "Not enough staff, increasing paperwork, having to work through breaks without a proper rest, and coming into work when they are ill, for fear they will lose their job. These are the issues that are coming up time and again," says Andrea. "They feel that they have nowhere to go. But we're saying we're on your side."

Here to help

The RCN's Member Support Services offers free and confidential guidance, representation and support on your career, counselling, welfare rights and guidance, peer support and immigration advice. The service works closely with colleagues in RCN regional offices and the RCN's legal department. To find out more visit www.rcn.org.uk/support/services

*Beyond breaking point? A survey report of RCN members on health, wellbeing and stress, is available on the publications section of the RCN website www.rcn.org.uk/development/publications

‘Treat it as child abuse’

The RCN has played a central role in helping to make recommendations aimed at tackling female genital mutilation, as Sophie Lowthian explains



A new report has warned that thousands of girls at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) are being failed by the health and justice systems. It estimates that in 2001 more than 66,000 women resident in England and Wales had undergone FGM, and that more than 23,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of, or may have undergone, the procedure.

The report has been produced by an intercollegiate group including the RCN. It calls for health and social care workers and teachers to identify girls at risk as early as possible, and treat them as if they were at risk of child abuse.

FGM, also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting, is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as “all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the

female genital organs for non-medical reasons”.

The report makes recommendations to help tackle FGM in the UK. Carmel Bagness, RCN Midwifery and Women’s Health Adviser and one of the report’s editors, says: “The recommendations cover issues such as a lack of consistent data on the numbers of those affected, and provide an opportunity to focus public and professional attention on this violent abuse of girls and young women.

“The report makes it clear that nursing staff, midwives and doctors must work with the police, teachers and social services when they have concerns,” Carmel adds. “It is critical all professionals working with girls and young women understand their responsibilities in identifying and reporting those at risk or who have been subjected to this cruel abuse.”



It’s a care issue, not a black or minority ethnic issue

One of the barriers to preventing FGM highlighted in the report is that some NHS professionals have sometimes been concerned that they risk offending or stigmatising people from minority ethnic communities. “It’s a care issue, not a black or minority ethnic issue,” says RCN Deputy President Cecilia Anim, who attended the report launch event at the House of Commons. “It’s about time we moved away from the screen of being culturally sensitive.

“This is about cruelty and abuse of human rights. We must work together to put a stop to this heinous practice. These children cannot speak for themselves. We have to be their voice, hear their screams, and act on it.” Cecilia is calling on RCN members to help raise awareness of FGM. “Nursing staff across the UK can help stop this dreadful crime by reporting instances of FGM. Please share this report so that together we can eradicate this horrendous form of child abuse.”

➔ See *Tackling FGM in the UK: Intercollegiate recommendations for identifying, recording and reporting at* www.rcn.org.uk/fgm

The group that produced the report includes the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives, the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, Equality Now and Unite/CPHVA

Tackling FGM

Recommendations include:

- **treat FGM as child abuse**
- **hold frontline professionals accountable**
- **report cases of FGM**
- **document and collect information:** the NHS should collate information on FGM and its associated complications in a consistent and rigorous way
- **empower frontline professionals:** by developing their competence, knowledge and awareness.

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Leading from the front

Recently elected Chair of RCN Council Michael Brown sets out his vision to involve more members in the work of the College's governing body



It's more important than ever for members to engage with Council's work

Michael was inspired to become a nurse by the nursing staff who cared for his grandmother when he was 17, especially remembering the dignity and respect with which they looked after the whole family. He became active in the College nearly 25 years ago, initially working as a steward and safety representative.

As the former Vice-chair of RCN Council and RCN Scotland Board Chair, he has already led groups of committed individuals who are dedicated to nursing and the RCN. But taking on the role of Chair of Council is not for the faint-hearted.

Facing challenges

The RCN is fortunate to have a new Council Chair with a background that means that he can handle his challenges with some confidence.

A nurse and RCN member since 1989, his current roles as workforce solutions manager and partnership facilitator mean that he is all too familiar with the difficulties confronting RCN members right now.

"I understand what members are up against because I'm facing exactly the same thing in my own work. I have the benefit of coming from an active branch structure and am based in a hospital, so I'm very aware of the challenges we're all confronting," he says.

It's this 'can do' attitude that led Michael on the path to his current role. "About 10 years ago I became interested in the work of the Scotland Board – I wanted to make



a difference," he said. "I looked at myself and thought 'I can do this.'"

Now, as Chair of Council, his priorities mirror those of so many members. Addressing the pressure on nursing is at the top of his agenda. "We must get workforce planning right," he says. "Council needs to get out there and ask the right questions. Our concerns about standards must also be heard."

We need to listen

Involving more members in the RCN's work is also central to Michael's vision. "It's more important than ever for members to engage with Council's work, so we need to listen and make sure the structures are in place to make that happen.

"I want members to contact me. If you have a concern I would urge you to get in touch," he says. "I've already been privileged to represent Scotland's nurses on national groups and I now look forward to representing nursing staff from all over the UK."

What does RCN Council do?

RCN Council is responsible for the overall governance of the RCN and policy-making on behalf of members. It sets the strategic direction of the organisation and has ultimate responsibility for its long term financial sustainability.

There are 31 members of RCN Council, with two members each from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and from each of the nine England regions. They are directly elected by members in their country or region. RCN Council also includes the President and Deputy President, the chair of RCN Congress, as well as two health practitioner members representing health care assistants and assistant practitioners, plus two student members. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/rcn_council

Care homes going for gold



End of life care gets the gold treatment as an RCN forum member uses a national training programme to improve care for residents

Karen Williams, a committee member of the RCN Pain and Palliative Care Forum, manages Birtley House nursing home in Surrey. She and her 107-strong team recently completed Gold Standards Framework (GSF) training in end of life care.

The national GSF programme has been running since 2004. It enables care home staff to deliver more personalised care, providing residents with a better quality of life and reducing hospitalisation.

Karen said: "I feel really strongly that palliative care should be delivered at the point where the person is. It shouldn't be the case that people at the end of their lives have to go into hospital to receive good palliative care."

Since starting the programme two years ago, Karen has doubled the number of nurses at the home and increased carer numbers. Everyone has been involved in the training, which consists of workshops and specific care tasks.

"GSF has been a positive experience for the whole team as it's allowed us to improve and gain confidence in



It shouldn't be the case that people at the end of their lives have to go into hospital

dealing with end of life care and is positive for the residents," said Karen.

More than 2,000 care homes around the UK have taken part in the training to become GSF-accredited. So far, 400 care homes have been given accreditation.

Karen is currently waiting to be inspected by a GSF auditor. Initial training costs £3,000, but other expenditure including recruitment of extra nursing staff, can mean costs escalate.

"It's a lot of hard work," said Karen. "As a care home manager you have to be very dedicated and it does cost money, but our end of life care is 100 per cent better."

For more on GSF visit www.goldstandardsframework.org.uk

District nurse numbers on course to rise

The RCN's *Frontline First* campaign highlights the decline of community-based services, including district nursing. An RCN member explains how she is helping to reverse the trend

Fiona Longstaff has been involved in creating a new university course to help combat the issue of declining district nurse numbers.

A former district nurse herself, Fiona is a post-registration education co-ordinator for Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust. She has been working with Anglia Ruskin University to commission a two-year specialist practitioner training programme.

Fiona said: "There's been a decline in district nurses nationally over the past decade as a result of the under-investment in the specialist practitioner role. We're now able to address that decline with the new course being commissioned. Working on the course at Anglia Ruskin means that we can start to build those numbers up again."

In England, the number of district nurses fell by 39 per cent between 2002 and 2012. The course at Anglia Ruskin takes its first intake of students in January.

"It's been fantastic to be involved in getting this course started," said Fiona. "This has been good for



This has been good for morale for our district nursing teams

morale for our district nursing teams and we've had huge interest in the course, so are ready with more district nurses to be trained."

Join the RCN District Nurses' Forum via the RCN website.

World Aids Day

Ahead of World Aids Day on 1 December, Jason Warriner, Chair of the RCN Public Health Forum, highlighted the continued importance of HIV testing.

Jason, Clinical Director of the Terrence Higgins Trust, said: "Around 100,000 people in the UK live with HIV. The issue is still here, it's not gone away."

Leading up to World Aids Day is National HIV Testing Week. The first National HIV Testing Week last November broke the world record for testing as thousands of people flocked to clinics and special events.

"The good news is that once people are diagnosed and accessing care and treatment, life expectancy is normal," Jason added.



Forum chair remembered

Tess Hall-Patch, an occupational health nurse who was heavily involved in the RCN's nursing forums, has died aged 89. Tess played a pivotal role in promoting occupational health nursing nationally and was instrumental in the creation of the RCN Occupational Health (OH) Managers Forum in 1978. She was also Vice-chair and Chair of the RCN Society of Occupational Health Nursing (SOHN) between 1978 and 1982.

She worked at food manufacturer Rank Hovis McDougall, and in 1980 moved to Ford Motor Company in Dagenham to take up a post as chief nursing officer. Always striving to promote OH nursing, Tess supported a number of developments in education.

New RCN publications

Nurses, health care workers and students can now find updated guidance online from the RCN on working with people with learning disabilities. *Meeting the health needs of people with learning disabilities* outlines different types of disability and specific health needs, and explains relevant legislation.

Also available on the RCN website is the newly updated *Standards for the weighing of infants, children and young people in the acute health care setting*. This focuses primarily on weighing children in acute hospital settings and aims to identify best practice and ensure consistency in practice across the UK.

Fiona Smith, RCN Adviser in Children and Young People's nursing, said: "This publication has been revised to reflect policy and professional practice issues. Practitioners will find the content helpful when caring for children and young people."

Both publications can be found at www.rcn.org.uk/publications

RCN in Northern Ireland

Members in Northern Ireland who are involved in providing health care services for children and young people are being invited to have their say on a government 10-year strategy.

The RCN is currently preparing its response to a Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety consultation on the delivery of health care services for children.

Email john.knape@rcn.org.uk or telephone 028 90 384 600. The closing date is 31 January.

What I'm thinking

Kath Hearnshaw
RCN Intravenous and
Haematology Network member



I'm very proud to be a member of the UK Cell Salvage Action Group, promoting cell salvage as an option for patients, and developing tools to make it happen. Cell salvage, or autologous blood transfusion, involves using a patient's own blood for transfusion, collected during and after operations involving high blood loss.

We have raised the profile of cell salvage as a safe option for people undergoing a range of operations, sharing good practice and offering expert advice to those starting out to provide it.

However, autologous blood should be labelled in just the same way as any blood that is used for transfusion in order to avoid serious errors. In 2011 we developed and trialled a universal label, which is available free of charge from the machine manufacturers. The universal adoption of the autologous label will make cell salvage even safer and is another achievement for the group.

www.rcn.org.uk/forums

Partners in practice

26 February - 27 February 2014
The Majestic Hotel, Ripon Road,
Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 2HU



The RCN Education Forum national conference and exhibition will be of particular interest to nurse educators, whether working in the NHS or private and voluntary sectors, universities or colleges, and at a range of levels – from supporting the education of health care assistants to post-doctoral education.

Confirmed keynote speakers are:

- Lisa Bayliss-Pratt, Director of Education, Health England
- Katerina Kolyva, Director of Continued Practice, NMC (National Medical Council)
- Kathleen Duffy, practice educator, NHS Lanarkshire.

The programme will also deliver concurrent sessions based around the following themes:

- student experiences
- training and development
- delivering excellent professionals
- innovation
- recruitment and retention.

Book online at www.rcn.org.uk/education2014 or contact education@rcn.org.uk

Northern Ireland

www.rcn.org.uk/northernireland

Belfast

Wednesday 11 December
17 Windsor Avenue, Belfast,
BT9 6EE
Assessment of the deteriorating patient – for registered nurses working in nursing homes. For more information call the RCN on 028 90384600 or email cst@rcn.org.uk

Scotland

www.rcn.org.uk/scotland

Edinburgh

Wednesday 11 December
RCN Scotland HQ, 42 South Oswald Road, Edinburgh EH9 2HH
An event for care home managers focusing on solutions to the challenges facing care and nursing homes in Scotland.

Wales

www.rcn.org.uk/wales

Cardiff

Friday 6 December
RCN Wales, Ty Maeth, Cardiff CF14 4XZ
RCN Wales study day – record keeping for health care staff. For details contact Rhona Workman on 029 2068 0713 or email rhona.workman@rcn.org.uk

East Midlands

www.rcn.org.uk/eastmidlands

Nottingham

Friday 13 December
Room F04, Post Graduate Education Centre, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham
Need information or advice on an employment or professional issue? Then come along to this drop-in session for health care assistants (HCAs), which starts at 9am.

Eastern

www.rcn.org.uk/eastern

Norwich

Thursday 5 December
Dunston Hall, Ipswich Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR14 8PQ
Norfolk county conference. For more information, contact karen.edwards@rcn.org.uk or call 01284 717711

London

www.rcn.org.uk/london

Central London

Wednesday 11 December
Royal College of Nursing HQ, 20 Cavendish Square, London
RCN and RCGP Cancer Red Flag one day seminar. The overall aim of the conference is to broaden the knowledge, skills, and confidence of GPs and nurses when dealing with people with cancer. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/2013cancer

Northern

www.rcn.org.uk/northern

Manchester

Wednesday 11 December
Malmaison Hotel, 1 - 3 Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1LZ
RCN members in the Northern region are invited to attend the RCN England emergency care summit. This event offers practical solutions to the issues affecting members working in acute and emergency care. For information, contact natalie.bostock@rcn.org.uk

North West

www.rcn.org.uk/northwest

Manchester

Saturday 1 February 2014
Crowne Plaza, Manchester
RCN Imaging Forum roadshow. Practical advice, information and new ideas. Supported by Cook Medical, the roadshow will enhance your ability to provide up-to-date, evidence-based care. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/events

South East

www.rcn.org.uk/southeast

London

Thursday 5 December
RCN HQ, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN
Care to manage – manage to care is for managers working in care homes, nursing homes and other independent sector organisations. Call events registration on 02920 546460.

South West

www.rcn.org.uk/southwest

Dorset

Thursday 5 December
Education Centre, Dorset County Hospital, Williams Avenue, Dorchester
RCN West Dorset branch AGM, 5- 7pm. All members welcome. We will be discussing current local issues and voting for the branch executive. For more information, contact dee.angell@dchft.nhs.uk

West Midlands

www.rcn.org.uk/westmidlands

Stoke-on-Trent

Thursday 12 December
Room FF1, Healthcare Careers and Skills Academy, Old Admissions Block, City General Hospital, Stoke-on-Trent
This RCN North Staffordshire local learning event - starting at 1.30pm - is focusing on safeguarding issues.

Yorkshire & The Humber

www.rcn.org.uk/yorkshireandhumber

Leeds

Wednesday 18 December
Royal College of Nursing Regional Office
9 Bond Court, Leeds, LS1 2JZ
Retired members are invited to attend the launch of the Yorkshire and the Humber Retired Nurses Network at 2pm. Contact adele.bird@rcn.org.uk for details.